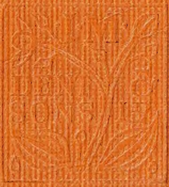
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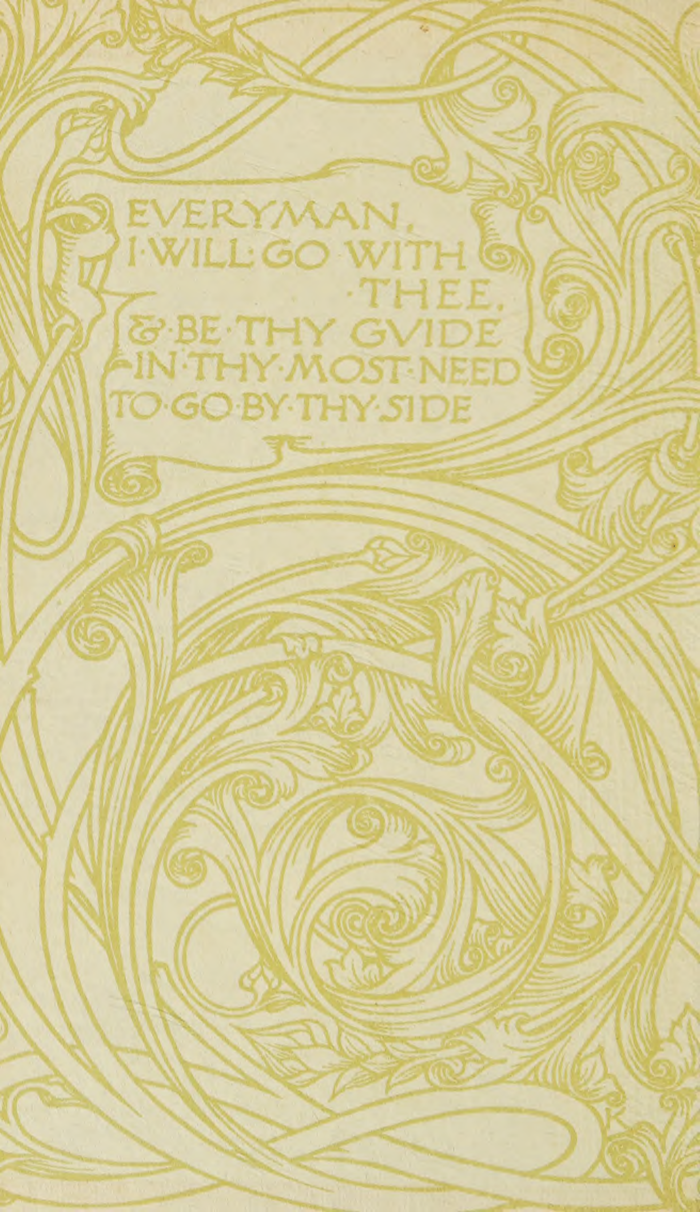
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ESSAYS AND
BELLES LETTRES

CONVERSATIONS OF GOETHE
WITH ECKERMANN. TRANSLATED BY JOHN OXENFORD.
EDITED BY J. K. MOORHEAD, WITH AN
INTRODUCTION BY HAVELOCK ELLIS

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CONVERSATIONS OF GOETHE with ECKERMANN

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INTRODUCTION

"The best German book there is"—that was the judgment of Nietzsche concerning Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*. It is a saying that may well lead us to reflect. Here was one of the great figures of the world, who in the course of a long life produced works of which many are celebrated everywhere; and half a century after his death we are told by another figure of high rank, himself also a German, that not any of these famous works but another book, produced by a seemingly insignificant and uncultured man, is to be placed at the summit of all German literature.

Those who in literature devote themselves to the glory of others have usually been long in reaching their proper place in human esteem. Their very success causes this neglect; in the dazzling light they have turned on the figure they celebrate they are themselves scarcely seen. The authors of the Gospels of Jesus, which yet are the most revered of human productions, remain shadowy and uncertain figures. The most famous European philosopher is Socrates; and we seldom remember that, outside the pages of Plato, Socrates is a dim and obscure person.

More to the point, however, when we are dealing with Eckermann, is Boswell, with whom he was almost contemporary. Boswell's achievement was in some respects greater than Eckermann's; for Goethe would have been not less famous, though less intimately known, if Eckermann had never met him. But Johnson would have been little more than a name for those who were not students of English eighteenth-century literature if Boswell had never lived; it is sometimes disputed, but remains in a sense true, that the figure of Dr. Johnson we know is the artistic creation of Boswell. Yet until recent years Boswell has generally been regarded as rather a contemptible fellow, a weak, simple, foolish, dissipated Scotch laird, with only just the modicum of intelligence needed to set down what he knew of the great man in whose company he was privileged to live. That was, for instance, Macaulay's estimate of Boswell; needless to say it is not the estimate which prevails to-day. His undeniable weaknesses no longer dim the figure of a great artist who bent all that was sensitive in his own temperament, and all that was laborious, to one single task which has made him the incomparable master of biography, and almost the patron saint of biographers.

Eckermann has not been treated with such contempt as Boswell; he has been looked upon as completely insignificant and almost ignored. It is not till to-day, nearly a century after his work was done, that it has seemed worth while to write his life, though now indeed that has been very thoroughly accomplished in two substantial volumes by Professor Houben, who has also produced the best edition of the *Conversations*. We may see clearly to-day that Eckermann, even though in his other activities he may be negligible, was by temperament and by training admirably equipped for the work which, within its narrow limits, is comparable to Boswell's.

Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* may be said to belong to the class of table-talk literature in which many figures of varying degree of eminence have been presented: Luther and Selden and Coleridge and Northcote, to name a few. Such books at the best are really of the nature of biography as Boswell understood it; but they form a class because their conscious aim is slighter, and because, chronologically, they seldom cover more than a small slice of life. But in proportion as they are adequate they are more than mere brilliant fragments of the subject's conversation; it is their function to represent the man's speech as the transparent veil which reveals his personality, so that we are conscious not of a mere succession of opinions on a flat surface but of a living complex person moving in his own three-dimensional space. We may realize the supremacy of Eckermann in this field if we compare his work with, for instance, that of a contemporary Englishman, H. N. Coleridge, who was at the same time noting down the sayings of his famous father-in-law and uncle, S. T. Coleridge, for a volume of *Table Talk*. It is a book to be cherished and consulted; it contains splendid chunks, sometimes of gold. But they are all shapeless and disconnected, fallen on the page at random; they are never articulated to any conversation and they have no background whatever, there is not one word of description, there are no interlocutors, and the recorder himself with misplaced modesty never appears. So that while we have here an anthology of thoughts that will always be precious, as a picture of Coleridge it scarcely exists; a fine opportunity to bring us near to the personality of one of the great figures in English imaginative literature was for ever lost.

Eckermann, simple and modest and unaffected as he was, never suppresses his own presence, while yet never emphasizing it. We know him from the *Conversations*, and Dr. Houben has further enabled us to realize precisely the manner of man he was. Of humble birth—his father having failed with a little shop went about the countryside peddling stockings and such like—Johann Peter Eckermann had been born in 1792 at Winsen-on-the-Luhe, a little below Hamburg. He succeeded, but with much difficulty and many delays, in gaining a certain amount of school education—though he was for the greater part his own teacher—and even culture, so that late in life he acquired a doctorate. In the course of this he supported himself by occupying very minor and ill-paid official posts; which at last led him, at the age of twenty-three, to Hanover, where in a royal city and a centre of literature and science, he was for the first time surrounded by opportunities for self-development. But, a little before then, he had been in the army, as a volunteer in the war against Napoleon; and that brought him to Brussels, where the wealth of art was a revelation; he would stand entranced before the pictures of Rubens, and resolved to become a painter himself, for he had already developed a taste for drawing, though his chief impulse at this time was to verse and to criticism; all this with a talent which, while not despicable, would never have secured fame. We may trace his early development in his letters to his intimate friend, Lange. "The art of poetry," he wrote at the age of twenty-five, "naturally stands first in my eyes, but to exercise this in full degree a study of the arts in general is necessary." And again: "Everyone along his own line! My struggle is not for bread, but for culture. And, after all, do the so-called bread studies always come off successfully?" Once more: "Everyone in his own element! My element is art." We see the ardour of the youth, with the mild earnest eyes and the long hair. It was an ardour that he never really outgrew.

After a preliminary youthful stage of enthusiasm for Schiller, young Eckermann had been drawn to Goethe's works. The attraction increased as his knowledge increased. It became both an immense admiration and a passionate affection. "I read of nothing and thought of nothing but only of him," he wrote later, "wherever I went, wherever I remained: in my walks and in my daily affairs, he was in my thoughts, even at night he entered into my dreams." It was one of the great events of his early life, when, after much trouble, he succeeded in obtaining a portrait of his idol.

In 1823, at the age of thirty-one, he succeeded in reaching Weimar, where Goethe seems to have become favourably predisposed almost at once. He had arrived at the right moment. Goethe was seventy-four years old, and still active, both in practical affairs and in literature; but with increasing years and diminishing energy the need to put his yet unfinished works into a finally ordered and completed shape was weighing on him. His swift insight enabled him to detect in Eckermann, despite his imperfect scholarly training, the man to assist him in this task. Eckermann had found his vocation and was content. Even though the immediate pecuniary reward was inconsiderable, he no longer sought any permanent post which might have brought in a more solid income and enabled him to marry. The girl to whom he had been engaged for ten years—their letters have been preserved—was naturally enough rather exasperated at this position of affairs and at the way her lover not only neglected to seek a definite post but even put aside offers that were made to him; she refers impatiently to "your great Goethe." Eckermann endeavoured to soothe poor Hanchen, and explained to her, gently and patiently, his own view of the situation. He was already realizing his mission in life, and it is clear that love was to play there a secondary part.

While Eckermann's temperament may not have been unduly sentimental, one feels that his attitude towards Goethe was really a transformation of the lover's attitude, and could have left over but a moderate adoration for his Johanna. It must be noted, however, that there was one moment when Eckermann was nearly carried off his feet by a quite human infatuation. To support himself at Weimar he took pupils, especially young Englishmen to whom he taught German out of Goethe's novels and plays; and in the summer of 1828 he had also a pupil in French, a young singer and actress, whom he had known since she was scarcely more than a child, Auguste Kladzig. Like himself, she was lonely; her father had just died, she lived unhappily with a stepmother, and sought consolation in her art and in mental work. Teacher and pupil were drawn to each other; sympathy soon took on a warmer tone. Dante-Eckermann, as Houben puts it, had found his Beatrice; by far his best poems were addressed to Auguste. Meanwhile his letters to Hanchen languished, he even neglected Goethe's society, and his absorption was evident to all around. In the struggle he fled for a time from Weimar and grew melancholy and ill. In January 1829, however, he wrote to Auguste that, "after my too great interest in you," relations with Goethe had been resumed, and "I am as happy as ever." But the struggle lasted some time longer—though he had day-dreams of Hanchen and Auguste in sisterly communion—and culminated in the best poem he ever wrote, *Renunciation*. At last and after many postponements (which may not have been regretted by Eckermann; for, as he had once remarked to Hanchen, he "had never thought happily over the state of marriage," so that at one moment she offered to release him), on November 9, 1831, Peter Eckermann and Johanna Bertram were married, and three days later Auguste resigned her position at the Weimar theatre and left the town—subsequently, in her turn, also marrying. Hanchen arrived at Weimar eager to be greeted by her bridegroom's "great Goethe." But she was bitterly disappointed. Goethe seems only to have seen her casually at his daughter-in-law's, for Ottilie gave the newcomer a warm-hearted welcome. She was never invited to Goethe's house, and he only once mentions her name in his diaries; it seems to have been a painful subject. Eckermann received no word of congratulation, or he could not fail to have mentioned it. He resumed his almost daily service in the temple where he was high priest. Goethe was once more supreme in his mind and heart.

It seems to Eckermann's biographer that Goethe, perhaps deliberately, troubled himself little about the material situation of his collaborator, who was "a pure fool in business matters," in allowing him to earn a precarious living by fees from his English pupils. The relationship seems, however, to have been regarded on both sides as mainly one of friendship, and Eckermann's services were indeed such as no payment could have recompensed. In the spring of 1831, however, Goethe at last drew up a contract by which Eckermann became the editor of his works with the right to a small percentage on the profits, though the conditions of the contract were difficult and uncertain; as if conscious of this, shortly before his death, Goethe arranged for a slight further benefit. Eckermann was content, and it seems to have been on the strength of this agreement that he finally married.

Eckermann was not, however, a blind worshipper—no one who is blind to defects can have a clear vision for qualities—and he could even be humorously critical at times, as when he narrates his discovery that the seeming omniscient Goethe was a child in some fields of knowledge and wanted to know if the sparrows in the hedge were larks. (That chanced to be a field where Eckermann had from childhood been at home; and at Weimar he had cheered his loneliness by setting up an aviary of forty birds, most of which had to be dispersed on his marriage.)

He is always sensitively alive to Goethe. Not only are the master's words uttered before us in a simple, spontaneous form of perfect shape—in which whatever there might be of Eckermann's art, it is an art which nature makes—but we are made aware at every moment of Goethe's presence; we see him and hear his voice, while every scene is led up to with natural art and becomes a picture of daily life, yet the daily life of one of the world's permanently great figures. It thus comes about that some of the most penetrating of Eckermann's pages are those that scarcely contain any "conversation" of serious interest; we recall the incomparable and unforgettable scene in which Eckermann teaches Goethe how to use his Belgian bow and arrows.[1] So that we have here a perfect setting for a long series of matured sayings on life and literature, on thought and art, on people and things; a distilled quintessence of wisdom, the like of which we shall scarcely find elsewhere; and beyond this we have the living and breathing figure of the aged Goethe himself.

Only a fine artist could have achieved this result, and an artist who was at the same time peculiarly fitted by nature for the end he achieved. In this respect we may liken Eckermann to Boswell, who accomplished with equal success an even more difficult task. Johnson was an intractable and unattractive figure to manipulate. "An extraordinary man," said a level-headed Scots lawyer who also had an insight into genius, Henry Mackenzie; but "his wisdom is dogmatical, and his wit unfeeling," so that "there is no winning quality about him." Yet by the biographer's art, and without distortion or even any apparent mitigation of the rugged features, it has come about that viewing him in Boswell's mirror posterity regards Johnson almost with affection. Eckermann's task was less difficult in so far as he had less rough and clumsy material to mould; but more difficult in that it was incomparably more complex and profound, unlovable even by virtue of that depth and that complexity. Goethe has often seemed cold, remote, forbidding, as inhuman as Leonardo; and scarcely any of the world's supreme spirits have evoked more repulsion in some minds. It is only in the pages of Eckermann that, while even gaining in greatness and depth, he becomes a familiar human being, to be touched with tenderness and affection. Houben compares Eckermann's art to that of a great actor with an affinity for a particular part, into which he can enter with that intimate penetration which the Germans call *Einfühlung*, and play with such skill that meanings are brought out which even the creator of the part had not been able to express. It is doubtless true that Goethe, who knew what Eckermann was doing, never confided to him anything of an intimate nature, and even when referring to some personal experience left it vague. Thus the narrative of October 7, 1827, sounds mysterious, though it clearly refers to Frau von Stein. There are, it appears, errors in Eckermann's statements; but they are unimportant—his fidelity remains, and is indeed always apparent. He was not a secretary, which Goethe already had, but a "helper and collaborator"; and he liked to think himself (as was indeed inscribed on his grave) Goethe's "friend." But the fact that Goethe maintained with him on intimate personal matters his habitual reserve really helps Eckermann to preserve his native quality of childlike directness and simplicity.

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[1] In the present abridgment a mere summary of this conversation is given.

We must always remember, however, that Eckermann was all the time an artist; and, while closely faithful to the essential truth, he omitted, rearranged, transposed, in order by art to come closer to the essential inner truth, as those who knew Goethe gladly testified. He so absorbed Goethe's style that his own literary manner in later life became that of Goethe, though not of Goethe at his best. His sensitive spirit, his peculiar sympathetic insight into Goethe's mind, had been revealed in essays written before he had ever seen Goethe, and they finally culminated in this incomparable book. Perhaps it is not surprising that the achievement of so insignificant a person was ignored, or dismissed, even by Heine, with a sneer. Apart from the decisive utterance (in *Human*

All too Human) which we owe to the genius of Nietzsche, it is only to-day, nearly a century after the *Conversations* were first published, that Eckermann takes his rightful place in the Walhalla of Fame.

Even to-day, indeed, Eckermann's achievement is scarcely appreciated at its real worth. There is still a latent note of protest in the declarations of those who vindicate his high claim. Almost as I write I come on a recent statement to an interviewer by the distinguished Spanish scholar, Eugenio d'Ors, who in chancing to refer to "that extraordinary book" the *Conversations with Goethe*, added: "Full justice has not even yet been done to Eckermann. He discovered a *terra incognita* in the philosophic order of formal expression. He was an inventor, just as Plato was in discovering the dialogue and Renan the philosophic drama." We may question here the special kind of eminence ascribed to Plato, or Eckermann's right to be placed beside him, but nothing could bring out more clearly the change of feeling that has taken place since Heine referred to Eckermann as a "parrot."

Eckermann's relations with Goethe lasted for some nine years, from his arrival in Weimar in 1823 to Goethe's death in 1832. During this period he was seeing Goethe sometimes almost daily, and we can check his own notes of the meetings by the entries in Goethe's diaries. It thus appears that only twenty per cent of their meetings find any record in the *Conversations*. In the first place the *Conversations* were prepared with Goethe's approval—even to some extent, it seems, his oversight; though he refused to give permission for their publication in his lifetime. Eckermann dealt freely, however, with the material he accumulated, even with dates, altering them when it suited his purpose, welding conversations together and manipulating them, always as an artist, yet an artist who remained true to the material he was moulding.

After Goethe's death, Eckermann stayed on in Weimar, where indeed was his life-work. He was occupied in the congenial task, entrusted to him by the master himself, of editing and publishing such of Goethe's work, suitable for the public, which remained unprinted. As it was not very remunerative work, Eckermann remained, as he had been for some years, the teacher in English and some other subjects of the young Prince Carl, of the ruling house, whose tutor was Frédéric Soret, a brilliant and versatile Swiss Huguenot—not only highly cultured, but also, unlike the simple Eckermann, a man of the world. He was, however, a good friend to Eckermann; and, having arrived at Weimar earlier and there established his position, he was well able to be helpful. In the end he became in some degree a partner in the *Conversations*, in the sense that talks of his with Goethe were incorporated in the work.[1]

Yet Eckermann's life was troubled. His editorial work led to a number of worries and difficulties. There was always a lack of money. His health, never strong, grew worse, and the Thuringian climate never suited him. The good and faithful Hanchen, who had been bred in a better social environment, brought comfort into the life of her peasant-born husband, who by himself went out in shabby clothes and was content to live meagrely; and we know that their life together was happy. But she was not strong, and after a brief married life of three years she died at the birth of her first living child. Eckermann struggled on in grief and loneliness; it seemed to him in moments of depression that he had no friends, though he really had many. But his health was improved by visits to the tonic climate of his native Hamburg; where, too, he found the warm hospitality of his own people. At last, in 1836, with considerable aid and support from Soret—though Eckermann never allowed his own judgment to be deflected where Goethe was concerned—the first two volumes of the *Conversations*, after being in preparation for twelve years, were really completed and published by Brockhaus at Leipzig.

The book made no great stir on its appearance, either at home or abroad; so that Eckermann's intention, formed at an early stage of his work, for an English translation, was not carried out till 1850.[2] But it was received with full approval by those whose good opinion was best worth having, especially the near friends of Goethe best able to judge of its value when compared with the efforts of enthusiastic but less competent disciples. They realized that Eckermann's cult of Goethe was balanced by his sound judgment and scrupulous honesty, while his eager receptivity and his many-sided interests enabled him to view the various aspects of Goethe's complex nature better than those who approached him with specialized mental outfits. This, no doubt, was the fundamental aptitude demanded for the task; while a trifling incident significantly illustrates Eckermann's scrupulous care in carrying it out. In translating into German a conversation recorded by Soret (who wrote in French) immediately after the news of the death of the grand duchess, Goethe's friend and patroness, Soret wrote how he found Goethe at dinner, "finishing his bottle of wine, with the air of being *en pointe* and speaking with vivacity." Eckermann, who had been present at the dinner, paused and reflected: it suggested that the wine had gone to the master's head; and there would be scandal, for already there was chatter about the large wine-bills at Goethe's house. So he wrote in his next letter to Soret: "We had on that occasion only *one* bottle of wine. Of that Frau von Goethe had about a glass, Walter and Wolf the same, I three or four, Goethe the remainder. He was in a cheerful, rather exalted mood, but the cause was not the wine," and he proceeds to explain the real causes. Soret replied: "I see in this a fresh proof of your care to put everything in the right light, and this for many readers is not a proof to be undervalued. You yourself have often referred to the bottle of wine, though you do not allow it to have influenced the conversation, and I will follow your example." So he altered the criticized sentence to: "Goethe sat at the table with Eckermann and talked with vivacity." But that, also, was not satisfactory to Eckermann, who changed it to: "I found him sitting at table with a good friend and drinking a bottle of wine." That incident illustrates the spirit of Eckermann's work for Goethe. It may not bring out Eckermann's distinction as an artist, which no one then seems to have seen. He himself realized, and in an important letter written in 1844 for publication clearly expounded, what he had done. Some, he says, suppose that this book consists of machine-made impressions from memory. But, while quite satisfied with the state of his memory, he was not concerned to produce the indiscriminating effect of a photograph; he aimed at selection: "all is perfectly true, but everything is selected. I was careful to wait days and weeks before writing down my impressions, so that all that was small might be lost and only what was significant be left." And later he speaks of "a spiritual crystallization" which sometimes involved spending months over a single conversation. He adds that he made it his aim to conceal this art and to produce an impression that should seem simply natural. Eckermann's book was thus a work of re-creation, if not of creation. It required the distance of half a century and more to see that it was to be, if not the most widely famous, the most intimately cherished of Goethe books, one of the great books of the world which can never grow stale.

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[1] Omitted in this abridgment.

[2] Sarah Margaret Fuller's translation appeared in 1839. Her version, however, was very incomplete.

After the first two volumes of the *Conversations* appeared in 1836, Eckermann had felt encouraged to prepare a third volume with the help of Soret's notes. This was possible only by a slow process of elaboration from the blended notes, enlarged from memory, moulded by Eckermann's insight into Goethe's spirit and Goethe's modes of expression. So it was that the third volume lingered for another twelve years, being published in 1848. Meanwhile Eckermann's life was still troubled by hardships, poverty, and ill-health, as well as a dispute with his publisher Brockhaus which he carried into the law courts and lost; and though eventually he became reconciled with Brockhaus the third volume was issued by another publisher.

The year 1848 was an unfortunate moment for such a book to appear. The world was full of social upheaval and political agitation, as far removed as possible from the lofty-Olympian atmosphere in which Eckermann's Goethe moved. Moreover, the literary generation then attaining maturity had grown up in revolt against Goethe and that world of serene art and cosmopolitan harmony which he represented. They were experiencing the reaction which every generation feels against the great men of the previous generation who had died in full fruition and the sunshine of popular fame. We have seen in England a similar reaction against the great figures of the Victorian period; and in France more recently we have seen how Anatole France, an immortal though among the lesser gods, was buried in solemn official pomp amid the silent and complete indifference of the literary generation that succeeded him. Such reactions, however unbalanced, are wholesome and necessary, if we are not to be unduly fettered to the past, for they are ultimately effaced by a more just balance of opinion. It was such a reaction of opinion that Eckermann had to encounter; although his third volume, notwithstanding the elaboration it had undergone, proved in its final shape to be not unworthy to rank with the two earlier volumes.

It attracted almost no attention. The press was occupied with other matters than conversations with Goethe, and those critics who had welcomed the earlier volumes had either passed away or could find no occasion for discussing the new volume. Only a few hundred copies were sold in two years, and even by 1867 only fifteen hundred copies had gone.

Notwithstanding this check to his literary success, Eckermann continued for six years longer to talk of a fourth volume of *Conversations*, and wrote of the rich material still in his hands. His statements became indeed at this period so large, and with so slender a foundation, that Houben believes he was already falling into the state of senility which became more marked before his death. No publisher was now willing to listen to his proposals. He found consolation in his son, whose education he had entirely conducted, and who lived with him in Weimar and now showed some ability as a painter. Notwithstanding his poverty, his struggles, his ill-health, Eckermann retained the esteem of those who knew him; and sometimes attracted visitors from afar, desirous to see the man who had been Goethe's friend and collaborator. One of them says that his character was like that of La Fontaine, and another that he recalled the amiable figure of the Vicar of Wakefield, and showed similar contentment with his simple conditions. He was surrounded as in early life by birds of many sorts, though he had sold whatever articles of value he possessed, to keep hunger from the door, and all furniture that could be dispensed with was at the pawnbroker's; but on the sofa, where he sat to take his morning coffee flavoured with a little salt, he still cherished two cushions that Hanchen had embroidered.

He died on December 3, 1854, suddenly, from a stroke. He had been forgotten; even the people of Weimar learnt with surprise that a man who had been the friend of Goethe was so recently living among them.

Eckermann will not be forgotten again. His fame is growing; his book is translated into all the languages of civilization; he has moulded the portrait by which we all best know the greatest modern figure in the world of the spirit. And it is due to Eckermann that Goethe is commonly regarded as an "Olympian."

That is not to say that the portrait is false. Its truth was recognized by those who best knew Goethe, nor is there any other to put in its place. Before he died, Goethe's immense significance had become more or less generally recognized throughout the civilized world; he was sought and courted by some of the most distinguished persons of his own and other lands. It is easy to gather together the notable tributes they offered to his fame. Yet the privilege of presenting to the world the final and immortal picture of Goethe was vouchsafed to none of the highly cultivated poets and scholars and historians who flocked to Weimar. It was reserved for the imperfectly and painfully educated son of the humble pedlar among the bleak northern marshes of Winsen-on-the-Luhe; who, not being considered strong enough to make a good hand-worker, had acquired a taste for writing and drawing, and, as we now realize, in his own way, possessed genius. So it came about that the simple man of the people was able through his sensitive receptivity to think himself into the richest and most complex mind of his time, and with a minimum of notes and facts to re-create him for the world as a living and moving person. In that process, it is true, he occasionally, as some people feel, idealized him; taming down some of the master's statements, omitting what might hurt anyone's susceptibilities, and whatever might seem to some too audacious, if not obscene—for the plebeian is sometimes more observant of conventional decorum than the aristocrat. Yet Eckermann had the skill to do this not only without injury to his art, but without offence to truth. His art, we see, was to make Goethe yet more essentially Goethe. So that to-day, a century after his death, when we wish to come into intimate contact with Goethe we neglect the younger and in many respects very different Goethe of whom no full portrait exists; too often we neglect his own work, even the *Faust* and the *Wilhelm Meister* which still to-day bear so closely on our lives. When we wish to come near to Goethe, it is the Goethe of the final stage we seek, and we go to Eckermann.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

1930.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

In abridging Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe*, the principle observed has been to omit nothing of Goethe's except mere formalities. At the same time, everything of interest in the remarks of other members of the circle has been preserved. Nearly one-eighth of the original bulk—not reckoning the Soret conversations[1]—has been got rid of by chastening Eckermann's extreme verbosity and what he himself might have consented to call his subjectiveness. As being in nowise a conversation with Goethe, his travel-journal, with its not uninteresting chat of theatres and hotels, has been rigorously summarized—even to the omission of the miraculous waiter he met at Frankfort. His exposition of the way to edit Goethe's correspondence is left out for the same reason.

The basis of this edition is John Oxenford's translation, published in two volumes in 1850; Oxenford's, in turn, was partially based on Sarah Margaret Fuller's abridgment of 1838. Some errors and infelicities of his version are here corrected. Even Oxenford did not insert everything found in the German: catering for the contemporaries of Queen Victoria, he had to omit—especially in the Soret sections, with which we have nothing to do. The two passages he omitted from the Eckermann part are here restored: they occur respectively under the dates of July 9, 1827, and February 20, 1829.

The subordinate party to these Conversations introduced them, on their first publication, with an account of his own life until his meeting with Goethe; from which account the following biographical sketch is mainly derived.

Johann Peter Eckermann, the youngest child of his father's second marriage, was born on the 21st of September, 1792, in a hut at Winsen-on-the-Luhe, between Lüneburg and

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[1] Soret's conversations with Goethe, with which Eckermann supplemented his own, are here omitted. They are relatively few, and generally of inferior interest: the most notable thing in them, perhaps, is Goethe's repeated reference to Jeremy Bentham as "that madman"—he wondered how so old a man could be a reformer.

Hamburg, in the Electorate of Hanover. His father owned a small piece of land and a cow, and travelled about the adjoining heathland, hawking ribbons, yarn, quills, and linen; and Johann Peter, in childhood, gleaned, minded cows, collected litter and fuel, and gathered and sold acorns. He first showed artistic ability by copying a picture of a horse that was on a packet of tobacco. Through the influence of the Oberamtmann and other highly-placed persons, he took lessons, along with better-class children, in French and Latin; and, for two years after his confirmation, was clerk to a local Justiz-beamter—until, in 1810, the French occupation abolished the office at Winsen. He was in the office of direct taxes at Lüneburg until the next year, and then in that of the under-prefect in Uelzen until 1812; when he became secretary of the mayoralty of Bevensen. In the spring of 1813 he left this post to become a volunteer in the Kielmansegge Jäger Corps, against the French. He made the 1813–14 campaign through Mecklenburg and Holstein and before Hamburg. Afterwards, on duty in Flanders and Brabant, he became acquainted with the great pictures of the Netherlands, and began copying at Tournay. But he was interrupted by marching orders; and, the corps being disbanded at Hamelin in the autumn of 1814, he went home. His father was dead, and he lodged with a married sister.

In the winter of 1815 he walked the forty leagues to Hanover, to study under the artist Ramberg. He lodged with a friend, and drew; but in May his health failed. He was obliged to renounce the artistic life, and obtained a post in the army clothing department, with a commission. His friend had some literary culture, and showed him Körner's *Lyre and Sword*; which stimulated Eckermann, in view of the expected return of the German troops from France, to compose and to distribute copies of a poem describing a soldier's hardships. He continued writing poetry, and became familiar with the work of Schiller and Klopstock, and finally of Goethe.

Growing aware of his need for education, he took private lessons in Latin and Greek; and then, when nearly twenty-five, became a student at the Gymnasium—spending there five hours a day, besides doing his office work, which occupied about the same length of time. The strain broke his health again, and he left the school in the spring of 1817. He wrote an unsuccessful play, to combat the current vein of Fate and Destiny in drama. He resigned his position in the Hanover army, and in May of 1821 went to Göttingen to enter the university—taking jurisprudence as a "bread" (livelihood) study. In his second year he deserted jurisprudence for philology. He left the university in the autumn of 1822; and in country lodgings near Hanover he wrote a volume of essays entitled *Beyträge zur Poesie* (Contributions to—or rather, *on*—Poetry). In order to have this volume published by Cotta, he resolved to seek assistance from Goethe, to whom he had already sent a copy of his poems. At the end of May 1823, therefore, Eckermann travelled on foot "over Göttingen and the Werrathal," to Weimar.

This brings us to the beginning of his Conversations. Thenceforward Eckermann remains swallowed up in Goethe. In 1827 the Philosophic Faculty of Jena gave him the degree of Doctor. He became, as will be seen, tutor to the heir of the Grand Duke Charles-Frederick, young Charles-Alexander, born 1818; who, as Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar Eisenach from 1853, lived to see the first year of the twentieth century.

On the 9th of November, 1831, Eckermann married Johanna Bertram. In 1838 he was made "grand-ducal counsellor" and librarian to the Grand Duchess. He edited Goethe's posthumous works. He died at Weimar on the 3rd of December, 1854.

Eckermann's own published works are:

Beyträge zur Poesie, mit besonderer Hinweisung auf Goethe. Stuttgart, 1824.

Gespräche mit Goethe. Vols. I and II, Leipzig, 1836.

Gedichte. Leipzig, 1838.

Einige Worte über den Rechtsstreit gegen Borckhaus in Betreff der Gespräche mit Goethe. Weimar, 1846.

Gespräche mit Goethe. Vol. III (Supplemental). Magdeburg, 1848.

Aus Goethes Lebenskreise: J. P. Eckermanns Nachlass. Edited by F. Tewes. Berlin, 1905.

On p. 319, line 33, "theatre-box" was inserted on the understanding that Blücher cultivated oratory by observing how actors spoke. This interpretation was made in ignorance of Blücher having been a Freemason. The primary meaning of the German word (Loge) is theatre-box, but it also means a Freemasons' Lodge.

EXTRACT FROM PREFACE TO OXENFORD'S TRANSLATION (1850)

GOETHE was born in August 1749, and died in March 1832, so that his age is seventy-three when the Conversations begin, and eighty-two when they terminate.

In 1836, . . . Eckermann . . . published, in two volumes, his *Conversations with Goethe*. In 1848 he published a third volume, containing additional Conversations, which he compiled from his own notes, and from those of another friend of Goethe's, M. Soret, of whom there is a short account in the Preface to the Third or Supplemental Volume.[1] Both these works are dedicated to Her Imperial Highness Maria Paulouna, Grand Duchess of Saxe-Weimar and Eisenach.

Had I followed the order of German publication, I should have placed the whole of the Supplementary volume after the contents of the first two; however, as the Conversations in that volume are not of a later date than the others (which, indeed, terminate with the death of Goethe), but merely supply gaps, I deemed it more conducive to the reader's convenience to rearrange in chronological order the whole of the Conversations, as if the Supplement had not been published separately.

Still, to preserve a distinction between the Conversations of the First Book and those of the Supplement, I have marked the latter with the abbreviation "Sup." . . .

I feel bound to state that, while translating the First Book, I have had before me the translation by Mrs. Fuller, published in America. The great merit of this version I willingly acknowledge, though the frequent omissions render it almost an abridgment. The contents of the Supplementary volume are now, I believe, published for the first time in the English language.

J. O.

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[1] Soret's contributions are omitted. See Editor's Preface.

SELECTIONS FROM THE AUTHOR'S ORIGINAL PREFACE

. . . .

I MENTION these things to excuse the frequent and important gaps the reader will find, if he is inclined to read the book in chronological order. To such gaps belong much that is good, but is now lost, especially many favourable words spoken by Goethe of his widely scattered friends as well as of the works of various living German authors, while other remarks of a similar kind have been noted down. . . . Books have their destinies even at the time of their origin. . . .

The representations of the person of Goethe by Rauch, Dawe, Stieler, and David, have all a high degree of truth, and yet each bears more or less the stamp of the individuality that produced it. If this can be said of bodily things, how much more does it apply to the fleeting intangible objects of the mind! However it may be in my case, I trust that all those who, from mental power or personal acquaintance with Goethe, are fitted to judge, will not misinterpret my exertions to attain the greatest possible fidelity.

Having given these explanations as to the manner of apprehending my subject, I have still something to add as to the import of the work.

What we call the True, even in relation to a single object, is not something small; rather is it, even if simple, at the same time comprehensive; which, like the various manifestations of a deep and widely reaching natural law, cannot easily be expressed. It cannot be disposed of by a sentence, or by sentence upon sentence, or by sentence opposed to sentence; but, through all these, one attains just an approximation, not the goal itself. So, to give a single instance, Goethe's detached remarks on poetry often appear one-sided, and indeed often contradictory. . . .

But these contradictions are single sides of the True, and taken together denote the essence of truth itself and lead to an approximation to it. I have therefore been careful, in these and similar cases, not to omit these seeming contradictions, as they were elicited by different occasions in the course of dissimilar years and hours. I rely on the insight and comprehension of the cultivated reader. . . .

WEIMAR, 31*st October*, 1835.

EXTRACTS FROM PREFACE TO THIRD OR SUPPLEMENTAL VOLUME

. . . .

When I was so happy as to write my first two parts, I could sail with a fair wind; because the freshly-spoken words were then still ringing in my ears, and the living intercourse with that wonderful man sustained me in an element of inspiration, through which I felt borne as if on wings to my goal.

But now when that voice has been hushed for many years, and the happiness of those personal interviews lies so far behind me, I could attain the needful inspiration only in those hours in which it was granted me to enter into my own interior, and, in undisturbed reverie, to give a fresh colouring to the past, where it began to revive within me, and I saw great thoughts, and great characteristic traits before me, like mountains—distant indeed, yet plainly discernible, and illumined as by the sun of actual day. . . .

The living Goethe was again there: I again heard the peculiarly charming sound of his voice, to which no other can compare. I saw him again in the evening, with his black frock and star; jesting, laughing, and cheerfully conversing with the social circle in his well-lighted room. Another day, when the weather was fine, he was with me in the carriage, in his brown surtout and blue cloth cap, with his light grey cloak laid over his knees: there he was, with his countenance brown and healthy as the fresh air; his words flowing freely, and sounding above the noise of the wheels. Or I saw myself in the evening by the quiet taper-light again transported into his study, where he sat opposite me at his table, in his white flannel dressing-gown, mild as the impression of a well-spent day. We talked about things good and great: he set before me the noblest part of his own nature, and his mind kindled my own—the most perfect harmony existed between us. He extended his hand to me across the table, and I pressed it: I then took a full glass which stood by me, and which I drank to him without uttering a word, my glances being directed into his eyes across the wine. . . .

My relation to him was peculiar, and very intimate: it was that of the scholar to the master; of the son to the father; of the poor in culture to the rich in culture. He drew me into his own circle, and let me participate in the mental and bodily enjoyments of a higher state of existence. Sometimes I saw him but once a week, when I visited him in the evening; sometimes every day, when I had the happiness to dine with him either alone or in company. . . .

Winter and summer, age and youth, seemed with him to be engaged in a perpetual strife and change; nevertheless, it was admirable in him, when from seventy to eighty years old, that youth always recovered the ascendancy; autumnal and wintry days were rare exceptions. . . .

He was often concise and circumspect, not only in many of his writings but also in his oral expressions. When, however, in happy moments, a more powerful dæmon was active within him, that self-control abandoned him, his discourse rolled forth with youthful impetuosity, like a mountain cataract. . . . Thus, Marmontel said of Diderot, that whoever knew him from his writings only knew him but half; but that as soon as he became animated in actual conversation he was incomparable, and irresistibly carried his hearers along. . . .

WEIMAR, 21*st December*, 1847.

[Eckermann, according to the new German edition edited by Houben, made some mistakes in his dates. The dates here given are as corrected by Houben.]

1823

Weimar, June 10, 1823.

I ARRIVED here a few days ago, but did not see Goethe till to-day. He received me with great cordiality, and made me feel this day as one of the happiest in my life.

Yesterday, when I called to inquire, he fixed to-day at twelve o'clock to see me. I went at that hour, and found a servant waiting to take me to him.

The interior of the house impressed me pleasantly: everything was extremely simple and noble; even the casts from antique statues, placed upon the stairs, indicated Goethe's partiality for plastic art, and for Grecian antiquity. I saw several ladies moving busily about in the lower part of the house, and one of Ottilia's beautiful boys,[1] who came familiarly up to me, and looked me fixedly in the face.

After I had cast a glance around, I ascended the stairs, with the very talkative servant, to the first floor. He opened a room, on the threshold of which the motto *Salve* was a good omen of a friendly welcome. He led me through this apartment, and opened another somewhat more spacious where he requested me to wait. The air here was most cool and refreshing; on the floor was spread a carpet: the room was furnished with a crimson sofa and chairs, which gave a cheerful aspect; on one side stood a piano; and the walls were adorned with many pictures and drawings. An open door opposite disclosed a farther room, also hung with pictures, through which the servant had gone to announce me,

It was not long before Goethe came in, in a blue frock-coat, and with shoes: an impressive figure. He soon dispelled uneasiness by the kindest words. We sat on the sofa. I felt in a happy perplexity, and could say little or nothing.

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[1] Ottilia was Goethe's daughter-in-law, and the female head of the house—since his wife was dead. The boys were Walter and Wolfgang.

He began by speaking of my manuscript. "I have just come from *you*," said he; "I have been reading your writing all the morning; it needs no recommendation—it recommends itself." He praised the clearness of the style, the flow of the thought, and the peculiarity that all rested on a solid basis and had been thoroughly considered. "I will soon forward it," said he; "I shall write to Cotta by post to-day, and send him the parcel to-morrow."

We talked of my proposed excursion. I told him my design was to go into the Rhineland, where I intended to stay at a suitable place, and write something new. First, however, I would go to Jena, and there await Herr von Cotta's answer.

Goethe asked whether I had acquaintance in Jena. I replied that I hoped to come in contact with Herr von Knebel; on which he promised me a letter which would ensure me a favourable reception. "And, indeed," said he, "while you are in Jena, we shall be near neighbours, and can see or write to one another as often as we please."

We sat a long while together, in a tranquil affectionate mood. I forgot to speak for looking at him—I could not look enough. His face is powerful and brown—full of wrinkles, and each wrinkle full of expression! He spoke in a slow, composed manner, such as you would expect from an aged monarch who reposes upon himself, and is elevated above both praise and blame. I felt becalmed like one who, after many toils and tedious expectations, finally sees his dearest wishes gratified.

He then spoke of my letter, and remarked that a person able to treat *one* matter with clearness is fitted for many things besides.

"None can tell what turn this may take," said he; "I have many good friends in Berlin, and have lately thought of you in that quarter." Here he smiled pleasantly to himself. He then pointed out to me what I ought now to see in Weimar, and said he would desire secretary Kräuter to be my cicerone. Above all, I must not fail to visit the theatre. He asked me where I lodged, saying that he should like to see me once more, and would send for me at a suitable time.

We bade each other an affectionate farewell; I felt that he liked me.

Wednesday, June 11, 1823.

This morning, a card from Goethe, written by his own hand, desired me to come to him. I went and stayed an hour. He seemed quite different from yesterday, and had the impetuous and decided manner of a youth.

He entered, bringing two thick books. "It is not well," said he, "that you should go from us so soon; let us become better acquainted. But, as the field of generalities is so wide, I have thought of something in particular, which may serve as a ground-work for intercourse. These two volumes contain the Frankfort Literary Notices of the years 1772 and 1773, among which are almost all my little critiques written at that time. These are not marked; but, as you are familiar with my style and tone of thought, you will easily distinguish them from the others. I would have you examine somewhat more closely these youthful productions, and tell me what you think of them. I wish to know whether they deserve a place in a future edition of my works. From my present self these things stand so far, that I have no judgment about them. But you younger people can tell whether they are to you of any value, and how far they suit our present point of view. I have already had copies taken, which you can have by and by to compare with the originals. Afterwards we might ascertain whether here and there some trifle might not be left out, or touched up without injuring the whole."

I replied, I would gladly make the attempt.

"You will find yourself perfectly competent," said he, "when you have once entered on the task; it will come quite naturally."

He then told me he intended to set off for Marienbad in a week; and he should be glad if I could remain at Weimar till then, that we might become better acquainted.

"I wish, too," said he, "you would not merely pass a few days or weeks in Jena, but live there all the summer, till I return from Marienbad towards the autumn. Already I have written about a lodging for you and other things necessary to make your stay pleasant.

"You will find there the most various resources and means for further studies, and a very cultivated circle; besides, the country has so many aspects, that you may take fifty walks, each different from the others, each pleasant, and almost all suited for undisturbed thought. You will find there plenty of leisure to write many new things for yourself, and also to accomplish my designs."

I could make no objection to such good proposals, and consented joyfully. When I departed, he was especially amiable, and fixed an hour the day after to-morrow for further converse.

Monday, June 16, 1823.

I have lately been frequently with Goethe. To-day, I declared my opinion of his Frankfort criticisms, calling them echoes of his academic years: an expression that seemed to please him.

He then gave me the first eleven numbers of *Kunst und Alterthum*,[1] to take with me to Jena, with the Frankfort critiques as a second task.

"I wish," said he, "you would study carefully these numbers, and not only make a general index of contents but also set down what subjects are not to be looked upon as concluded—that I may thus see at once what threads I have to take up again and spin longer. This will be a great assistance to me, and so far an advantage to you, that you will more keenly observe and apprehend the import of each treatise than if you read merely from inclination."

I said that I would willingly undertake this labour also.

Thursday, June 19, 1823.

I was to have gone to Jena to-day; but Goethe yesterday requested earnestly that I would stay till Sunday, and then go by the post. He gave me yesterday the letters of recommendation, and also one for the family of Frommann. "You will enjoy their circle," said he; "I have passed many delightful evenings there. Jean Paul, Tieck, the Schlegels, and all the other distinguished men of Germany, have visited there, and always with delight; and even now it is the union-point of many learned men, artists, and other persons of note. In a few weeks, write to me at Marienbad, that I may know how you are going on, and how you are pleased with Jena. I have requested my son to visit you there."

I felt grateful for so much care, and was very happy to see that Goethe regarded me as his own.

Saturday, June 21, I bade farewell to Goethe; and on the following day I went to Jena, where I established myself in a rural dwelling, with good respectable folk. In the families of von Knebel and Frommann, I found, on Goethe's recommendation, a cordial reception and cultured society. I made the best possible progress with the work I had taken with me, and had, besides, the pleasure of receiving a letter from Herr von Cotta, in which he not only declared himself ready to publish my manuscript which had been sent him, but promised me a handsome remuneration, adding that I myself should superintend the printing at Jena.

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[1] *Art and Antiquity.*

Thus my subsistence was secured for at least a year; and I felt the liveliest desire to produce something new at this time, and so to found my future prosperity as an author. I hoped that, in my *Beyträge zur Poesie*, I had already come to an end with theory and criticism; and I had plans for innumerable poems and dramas of various sorts.

But I was not long content in Jena; my life there was too quiet and uniform. I longed for a great city, where there was not only a good theatre, but where life was lived on a great scale. In such a town, too, I hoped to live quite unobserved, and to be free always to isolate myself for undisturbed production.

Meanwhile, I had sketched the index for Goethe's *Kunst und Alterthum*, and sent it to Marienbad with a letter, to which I received the following answer:

"The index arrived just at the right time, and corresponds precisely with my wishes and intentions. Let me, when I return, find the Frankfort criticisms arranged in like manner, and receive my best thanks—which I already silently pay beforehand, by carrying about with me your views, situation, wishes, aims, and plans; so that, on my return, I may be able to discuss your future more thoroughly. To-day I will say no more. My departure from Marienbad gives me much to think of and to do; while my stay, all too brief, with persons of interest, occasions painful feelings.

"May I find you in that state of tranquil activity, from which, after all, world-views and experiences are most surely and clearly evolved. Farewell. Rejoice with me in the anticipation of a prolonged and more intimate acquaintance.

"GOETHE.

"Marienbad, August 14, 1823."

These lines of Goethe's determined me to take no step for myself, but to be wholly resigned to his will and counsel. Meanwhile, I wrote some little poems, finished arranging the Frankfort criticisms, and expressed my opinion of them in a short treatise intended for Goethe. I looked forward with eagerness to his return from Marienbad; for my *Beyträge zur Poesie* was almost through the press, and I wished at all events to refresh myself this autumn by going for a few weeks to the Rhine.

Jena, September 15, 1823.

Goethe is returned safe from Marienbad; but, as his country-house here is not so convenient as he requires, he will stay only a few days. He is well and active, so that he can take walks several miles long.

He began on my affairs:

"To speak out plainly, it is my wish that you should pass this winter with me in Weimar. With respect to poetry and criticism: you have a natural foundation for them. They are your profession, to which you must adhere, and which will soon bring you a good livelihood. But yet there is much, not strictly appertaining to this department, that you ought to know. However, you should get over it quickly this winter in Weimar: and you will wonder at the progress you have made by Easter; because you will have the best means, which are in my hands. Thus you will have laid a firm foundation for life. You will have attained comfort, and will be able to go forward with confidence."

I replied that I would regulate myself entirely by his wishes.

"With a home in my neighbourhood," continued Goethe, "I will provide you; you shall pass no unprofitable moment during the whole winter. Much that is good is brought together in Weimar; and you will find, in the higher circles, a society equal to the best in any great city. Besides, many eminent men are personally connected with me. With them you will make acquaintance, and you will find their conversation in the highest degree useful."

Goethe mentioned many distinguished men, indicating the peculiar merits of each.

"Where else," he continued, "would you find so much good in such a narrow space? We also possess an excellent library, and a theatre which yields to none in Germany. Therefore, I repeat, stay with us; and not only this winter, but make Weimar your home. Thence proceed highways to all quarters of the globe. In summer you can travel and see what you wish. I have lived there fifty years; and where have I not been? But I was always glad to return to Weimar."

Jena, Thursday, September 18, 1823.

Yesterday morning, before Goethe's return to Weimar, I had the happiness of another interview with him. What he said at that time was to me quite invaluable. All the young poets of Germany should know it.

He began by asking whether I had written any poems this summer. I said I had indeed written some, but on the whole I lacked the necessary ease. "Beware," said he, "of attempting a large work. *That* is what injures our best minds, even those finest in talent and most earnest in effort. I have suffered from this cause, and know how much it injured me. What have I not let fall into the well! If I had written all that I well might, a hundred volumes would not contain it.

"The Present will have its rights; the thoughts and feelings which daily press upon the poet will and should be expressed. But, if you have a great work in your head, nothing else thrives near it; all other thoughts are repelled, and the pleasure of life itself is for the time lost. What exertion and expenditure of mental force are required to arrange and round off a great whole! and then what powers, and what a tranquil situation, to express it with the proper fluency! If you have erred as to the whole, all your toil is lost; and further, if, treating so extensive a subject, you are not perfectly master of your material in the details, the whole will be defective, and censure will be incurred. Thus, for all his toil and sacrifice, the poet gets, instead of reward and pleasure, nothing but discomfort and a paralysis of his powers. But if he daily seizes the present, and always treats with a freshness of feeling what is offered him, he always makes sure of something good; and, if he sometimes does not succeed, has at least lost nothing.

"There is August Hagen, in Königsberg, a splendid talent: have you ever read his *Olfried und Lisena*? There you may find passages that could not be better; the situations on the Baltic, and the other particulars of that locality, are all masterly. But these are only fine passages; as a whole, it pleases nobody. And what labour and power he has lavished upon it! indeed, he has almost exhausted himself. Now, he has been writing a tragedy." Here Goethe smiled, and paused for a moment. I took up the discourse, and said that, if I was not mistaken, he had advised Hagen (in *Kunst und Alterthum*) to treat only small subjects. "I did so, indeed," he replied; "but do people conform to the instructions of us old ones? Each thinks he must know best about himself, and thus many are lost entirely, and many for a long time go astray. Past is the time for blundering about —*that* belonged to us old ones; and what was the use of all our seeking and blundering, if you young people choose to go the very same way over again? In this way we can never get on at all. Our errors were endured because we found no beaten path; he that comes later must not be seeking and blundering, but should use the instructions of the old ones to proceed at once on the right path. It is not enough to take steps which may some day lead to a goal; each step must be itself a goal.

"Carry these words about with you, and see how you can apply them. Not that I really feel uneasy about you, but perhaps by advice I help you quickly over a period not suitable to your present situation. If at present you treat only small subjects, freshly dashing off what every day offers you, you will generally produce something good, and each day will bring you pleasure. Give what you do to the pocket-volumes and periodicals, but never submit yourself to the requirements of others; always follow your own sense.

"The world is so great and rich, and life so full of variety, that you can never want occasions for poems. But they must all be *occasioned*; that is to say, reality must give both impulse and material. A particular event becomes universal and poetic by the very circumstance that it is treated by a poet. All my poems are occasioned poems, suggested by real life, and having therein a firm foundation. I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air.

"Let none say that reality wants poetical interest; for in this the poet proves his vocation, that he has the art to win from a common subject an interesting side. Reality must give the motive, the points to be expressed—the kernel; but to work out of it a beautiful animated whole, belongs to the poet. You know Fürnstein, called the Poet of Nature; he has written the prettiest poem possible, on the cultivation of hops. I have now proposed to him to make songs for the different crafts of working-men, particularly a weaver's song; and I am sure he will do it well, for he has lived among such people from his youth: he understands the subject thoroughly, and is therefore master of his material. That is exactly the advantage of small works; you need only choose those subjects of which you are master. With a great poem, this cannot be: no part can be evaded; all that belongs to the unification of the whole, and is interwoven into the plan, must be represented with precision. In youth, however, the knowledge of things is one-sided: a great work requires many-sidedness; so comes shipwreck."

I told Goethe I had contemplated writing a great poem upon the seasons, in which I might interweave the employments and amusements of all classes. "Here is the very case in point," replied Goethe; "you may succeed in many parts, but fail in others that refer to what you have not investigated. Perhaps you would do the fisherman well, and the huntsman ill; and if you fail anywhere, the whole is a failure—however good single parts may be—and you have not produced a perfect work. Give separately the single parts to which you are equal, and you make sure of something good.

"I especially warn you against great inventions of your own; for then you would try to give a view of things, and for that purpose youth is seldom ripe. Further, character and views detach themselves as sides from the poet's mind, and deprive him of the fulness requisite for future productions. And, finally, how much time is lost in invention, internal arrangement, and combination! for which nobody thanks us, even supposing our work happily accomplished.

"With a *given* material, on the other hand, all goes easier and better. Facts and characters being provided, the poet has only the task of animating the whole. He preserves his own fulness, for he needs to part with but little of himself; and there is much less loss of time and power, since he has only the trouble of execution. Indeed, I advise the choice of subjects that have been worked before. How many Iphigenias have been written! yet they are all different, each writer considers and arranges the subject after his own fashion.

"But, for the present, you had better lay aside all great undertakings. You have striven long enough; it is time that you should enter into the cheerful period of life; and for the attainment of this, the working out of small subjects is the best expedient."

We had been walking up and down the room. I could but assent, feeling the truth of each word. At each step I felt lighter and happier; for I must confess that grand schemes, of which I had not as yet been able to take a clear view, had been no little burden to me.

I feel years wiser through these words of Goethe's, and perceive the good fortune of meeting with a true master.

Weimar, Thursday, October 2, 1823.

I came here yesterday from Jena, favoured by agreeable weather. Immediately after my arrival, Goethe, by way of welcoming me to Weimar, sent me a season-ticket for the theatre. I passed yesterday in making my domestic arrangements—the rather, as they were very busy at Goethe's; for the

French Ambassador from Frankfort, Count Reinhard, and the Prussian State Counsellor, Schultz, from Berlin, had come to visit him.

This forenoon I was again at Goethe's. As I was about to take my leave, he said he would first make me acquainted with the State Counsellor, Schultz. In the next room we found that gentleman looking at the works of art. Goethe introduced me, and left us together.

[Some formal talk with Schultz.]

Tuesday, October 14, 1823.

This evening, I went for the first time to a large tea-party at Goethe's. I arrived first, and enjoyed the view of the brilliantly lighted apartments, which, through open doors, led one into the other. In one of the farthest, I found Goethe, dressed in black, and wearing his star—which became him so well. We were for a while alone, and went into the so-called "covered room" (*Deckenzimmer*), where the picture of the Aldobrandine Marriage, which was hung above a red couch, especially attracted my attention. On the green curtains being drawn aside, the picture was before my eyes in a broad light, and I was delighted to contemplate it quietly.

"Yes," said Goethe, "the ancients had not only great intentions, but they carried them into effect. We moderns have also great intentions, but are seldom able to bring them out with such power and freshness as we have thought them."

Now came Riemer, Meyer, Chancellor von Müller, and many other distinguished gentlemen and ladies of the court. Goethe's son and Frau von Goethe, with whom I was now for the first time made acquainted, also entered. The rooms filled gradually, and there was life and cheerfulness in them all. Some pretty youthful foreigners were present, with whom Goethe spoke French.

All, free and unconstrained, laughed and talked. I had a lively conversation with young Goethe[1] about Houwald's *Bild* (Picture),[2] which was given a few days since. I was greatly pleased to see this young man expound the points with so much animation and intelligence.

Goethe himself went about from one to another; he seemed to prefer listening, and hearing his guests talk, to talking much himself. Frau von Goethe would often come and lean upon him, and kiss him. I had lately said to him that I enjoyed the theatre highly, and that I felt great pleasure in giving myself up to the impression of the piece, without reflecting much upon it. This to him seemed right, and suited to my present state.

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[1] Goethe's only son, August.

[2] A drama of some celebrity.—J. O.

He came to me with Frau von Goethe. "This is my daughter-in-law," said he; "do you know each other?"

We told him that we had just become acquainted.

"He is as much a child about the theatre as you, Ottilia!" said he; and we exchanged congratulations upon this taste which we had in common. "My daughter," continued he, "never misses an evening."

"That is all very well," said I, "as long as they give good lively pieces; but when the pieces are bad, they try the patience."

"But," said Goethe, "it is a good thing that you cannot leave, and must hear and see even what is bad. By this means you are penetrated with the hatred for the bad, and come to a clearer insight into the good. In reading, it is not so—you throw aside the book if it displeases you; but at the theatre you must endure."

We now separated, and joined the rest, who were loudly and merrily amusing themselves about us—now in this room, now in that. Goethe went to the ladies; and I joined Riemer and Meyer, who told us much about Italy.

Afterwards, Counsellor Schmidt seated himself at the piano, and played some of Beethoven's pieces, which seemed received with deep sympathy. An intelligent lady then related many interesting particulars respecting Beethoven. Ten o'clock came, and thus had passed an extremely pleasant evening.

Sunday, October 19, 1823.

To-day, I dined for the first time with Goethe. No others were present except Frau von Goethe, Fräulein Ulrica,[1] and little Walter; and thus we were all very comfortable. Goethe appeared now solely as father of a family, helping to all the dishes, carving the roast fowls with great dexterity, and not forgetting between whiles to fill the glasses. We had much lively chat about the theatre, young English people, and other topics of the day; Fräulein Ulrica was especially lively and entertaining. Goethe was generally silent, coming out only now and then with some pertinent remark. From time to time he glanced at the newspaper, reading us some passages, especially about the progress of the Greeks.

They then talked about the necessity of my learning English;

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[1] Ottilia's sister.

and Goethe earnestly advised me to do so, particularly on account of Lord Byron—saying that a character of such eminence had never existed before, and probably would never come again. They discussed the merits of teachers here, but found none with thoroughly good pronunciation; on which account they deemed it better to go to some young Englishman.

After dinner, Goethe showed me some experiments relating to his theory of colours. The subject was, however, new to me; I understood neither the phenomena nor what he said about them. Nevertheless, I hoped that the future would afford me leisure to initiate myself into this science.

Tuesday, October 21, 1823.

I went to see Goethe this evening. We talked of his *Pandora.* I asked him whether this poem was to be regarded as a whole, or whether there was anything further. He said there was nothing further in existence, and that he had written no more because the first part was planned on so large a scale that he could not afterwards get through a second. Besides, what was done might be regarded as a whole, so he felt easy.

I said that I had penetrated the meaning of this difficult poem only by degrees, after I had read it so many times as almost to know it by heart. Goethe smiled, and said, "I can well believe that; for its parts are wedged one within another."

I added, that I could not be perfectly satisfied with what Schubarth said about this poem: that there was there united all that had been said separately in *Werther*, *Wilhelm Meister*, *Faust*, and the *Elective Affinities*—thus making the matter very incomprehensible and difficult. "Schubarth," said Goethe, "often goes a little deep; but he is very clever, and all his words are pregnant."

We spoke of Uhland; and Goethe said, "When I see great effects, I am apt to suppose great causes; and, with a popularity so extensive as that of Uhland, there must be something superior about him. However, I can scarcely form a judgment as to his poems. I took up his book with the best intentions, but fell immediately on so many weak and gloomy poems that I could not proceed. I then tried his ballads; where I really did find distinguished talent, and could plainly see that there was some foundation for his celebrity."

I then asked Goethe his opinion as to the kind of verse proper for German tragedy. "People in Germany," he replied, "will scarcely come to an agreement on that point. Everyone does just as he likes, what he finds suitable to his subject. The Iambic trimeter would be the most dignified measure; but it is too long for us Germans, who, for want of epithets, generally find five feet quite enough. The English, on account of their many monosyllables, cannot even get on so far as we do."

Goethe then showed me some copperplates, and afterwards talked about old German architecture; adding that, by degrees, he would show me a great deal in this way.

"We see in the works of the old German architecture," he said, "the flower of an extraordinary state of things. Whoever comes immediately close to such a flower, will only stare at it with astonishment; but he who sees into the secret inner life of the plant, into the stirring of its powers, and observes how the flower gradually unfolds itself, sees the matter with quite different eyes—he knows what he sees.

"I will take care that in the course of this winter you attain more insight into this important subject, that when you visit the Rhine next summer, the sight of the Minster of Strasburg and the Cathedral of Cologne may do you some good."

Saturday, October 25, 1823.

At twilight, I passed half an hour at Goethe's. He sat in a wooden arm-chair before his table. I found him in a gentle mood, as one who is filled with celestial peace or is recalling a delicious happiness he has enjoyed. Stadelmann gave me a seat near him.

We talked of the theatre, which was one of the topics that chiefly interested me this winter. The *Night on Earth* of Raupach was the last piece I had seen. I gave my opinion that the piece was not brought before us as it existed in the mind of the poet; that the Idea was predominant over the Life; that it was rather lyric than dramatic; and that what was spun out through five acts would have been far better in two or three. Goethe added that the idea of the whole, which turned upon aristocracy and democracy, was by no means of universal interest.

I then praised those pieces of Kotzebue's which I had seen—namely, his *Affinities*, and his *Reconciliation*. I praised in them the quick eye for real life, the dexterity at seizing its interesting side, and the genuine and forcible representation of it. Goethe agreed with me. "What has kept its place for twenty years, and enjoys the favour of the people," said he, "must have something in it. When Kotzebue contented himself with his own sphere, and did not go beyond his powers, he usually did well. It was the same with him as with Chodowiecky; who always succeeded perfectly with the scenes of common citizens' life, while if he attempted to paint Greek or Roman heroes it proved a failure."

He named several other good pieces of Kotzebue's, especially *The Two Klingsbergs*. "None can deny," said he, "that Kotzebue has looked about a great deal in life, and ever kept his eyes open.

"Intellect, and some poetry, cannot be denied to our modern tragic poets; but most of them are incapable of an easy, living representation—they strive after something beyond their powers; and for that reason I might call them *forced* talents."

"I doubt," said I, "whether such poets could write a piece in prose, and am of opinion that this would be the true touchstone of their talent." Goethe agreed with me; adding that versification enhanced, and even called forth, poetic feeling.

We then talked about his *Journey through Frankfort and Stuttgart to Switzerland*; which he has lying by him in three parts, in sheets, and which he will send me, that I may read the details and plan how they may be formed into a whole. "You will see," said he, "that it was written on the impulse of the moment; there was no thought of plan or artistical rounding: it was like pouring water from a bucket."

Monday, October 27, 1823.

This morning, I was invited to a tea-party and concert, which were to be given at Goethe's house this evening. The servant showed me the list of persons to be invited, from which I saw that the company would be very large and brilliant. He said a young Polish lady had arrived, who would play on the piano.

Afterwards the bill for the theatre was brought, and I saw that the *Chess-machine* was to be played. I knew nothing of this piece; but my landlady was so lavish in its praise, that I was seized with a great desire to see it. Besides, I had not been in my best mood all day, and the feeling grew upon me that I was more fit for a merry comedy than for such good society.

In the evening, an hour before the theatre opened, I went to Goethe. All was already in movement throughout the house. As I passed, I heard them tuning the piano in the great room, as preparation for the musical entertainment.

I found Goethe alone in his chamber; he was already dressed, and I seemed to him to have arrived at the right moment.

"You shall stay with me here," he said, "and we will entertain one another till the arrival of the others." I thought, "Now I shall not be able to get away: stop I must; and, though it is very pleasant to be with Goethe alone, yet, when a quantity of strange gentlemen and ladies come, I shall feel out of my element."

I walked up and down the room with Goethe. Soon the theatre became the subject of our discourse, and I had an opportunity of repeating that it was to me a source of new delight. "Indeed," added I, "I feel so much about it, that I have had a severe contest with myself, notwithstanding the great attractions of your evening party."

"Well," said Goethe, stopping short, and looking at me with kindness and dignity, "go then; do not constrain yourself; if the lively play this evening suits you best, is more suitable to your mood, go there. You have music here, and that you will often have again." "Then," said I, "I will go; it will, perhaps, do me good to laugh." "Stay with me, however," said Goethe, "till six o'clock: we shall have time to say a word or two."

Stadelmann brought in two wax lights, which he set on the table. Goethe desired me to sit down, and he would give me something to read. And what should this be but his newest, dearest poem, his *Elegy from Marienbad* !

I must here go back a little for a circumstance connected with this poem. Immediately after Goethe's return from Marienbad, the report had been spread that he had there made the acquaintance of a young lady equally charming in mind and person, and had been inspired with a passion for her. When her voice was heard in the Brunnen-Allee, he had always seized his hat, and hastened to join her. He had missed no opportunity of being in her society, and had passed happy days: the parting had been very painful, and he had, in this excited state, written a most beautiful poem; which, however, he looked upon as a consecrated thing, and kept hid from every eye.[1]

I believed this story, because it perfectly accorded not only with his bodily vigour, but also with the productive force of his mind and the freshness of his heart. I had, therefore, to congratulate myself on the fortunate moment which brought the poem before me.

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[1] This queer note is confirmed by Soret; who remarks, under date November 17, 1823, that Goethe's illness of that time was a result of the passion above mentioned.

He had, with his own hand, written these verses in Roman characters on fine vellum paper, and fastened them with a silken cord into a red morocco case; so that, from the outside, it was obvious that he prized this manuscript above all the rest.

I read it with great delight, and found that every line confirmed the common report. The first verse, however, intimated that the acquaintance was not first made, but only renewed, at this time. The poem revolved constantly on its axis, and seemed always to return to the point where it began. The close, wonderfully broken off, made a singular impression.

When I had finished, Goethe came to me again. "Well," said he, "there I have shown you something good. But you shall tell me what you think a few days hence." I was glad he excused me from passing a judgment at the moment. Goethe promised to let me see it again in some tranquil hour.

The *Chess-machine* was, perhaps, a good piece, well acted; but I saw it not—my thoughts were with Goethe. When the play was over, I passed by his house; it was all lighted up; I heard music from within, and regretted that I had not stayed there.

The next day, I was told that the young Polish lady, Madame Szymanowska, in whose honour the party had been given, had played on the piano to the enchantment of the whole company. I learned also that Goethe became acquainted with her last summer at Marienbad.

At noon, Goethe sent me a little manuscript, *Studies by Zauper*. I sent him some poems I had written this summer at Jena.

Wednesday, October 29, 1823.

This evening I went to Goethe just as they were lighting the candles. I found him in a very animated state of mind: his eyes sparkled with the reflection of the candle-light; his whole expression was one of cheerfulness, youth, and power.

As he walked up and down with me, he began to speak of the poems I sent him yesterday.

"I understand now," said he, "why you talked to me, at Jena, of writing a poem on the seasons. I now advise you to do so; begin at once with Winter. You seem to have a special sense and feeling for natural objects.

"Only two words would I say about your poems. You stand now at that point where you must break through to the high and difficult part of art—apprehension of what is individual.

You must do some violence to yourself to get out of the *Idea.* You have talent, and have got so far; now you *must* do this. You have been lately at Tiefurt; that might now afford a subject for the attempt. You may perhaps go to Tiefurt and look at it three or four times before you win from it the characteristic side, and bring all your *motif* together; but spare not your toil; study it throughout, and then represent it; the subject is well worth this trouble. I should have used it long ago, but I could not; for I have lived through those important circumstances, and my being is so interwoven with them, that details press unduly upon me. But you come as a stranger; let the Castellan tell you the past, and you will see only what is present, prominent, and significant."

I promised to try, but could not deny that this subject seemed far out of my way, and very difficult.

"I know well," said he, "that it is difficult; but apprehension and representation of the individual is the very life of art. Besides, while you content yourself with generalities, everybody can imitate you; but, in the particular, none can—and why? because no others have experienced exactly the same thing.

"And you need not fear lest what is peculiar should not meet with sympathy. Each character, however peculiar it may be, and each object you can represent, from the stone up to man, has generality; for there is repetition everywhere, and there is nothing to be found only once in the world.

"At this step of representing what is individual," continued Goethe, "begins, at the same time, what we call composition."

This was not at once clear to me, though I refrained from questions. "Perhaps," thought I, "he means the blending of the Ideal with the Real—the union of that which is external with that which is innate. But perhaps he means something else." Goethe continued:

"And be sure you put to each poem the date at which you wrote it." I looked at him inquiringly, to know why this was so important. "Your poems will thus serve," he said, "as a diary of your progress. I have done it for many years, and can see its use."

It was now time for the theatre. "So you are going to Finland?" called he, jestingly, after me; for the piece was *John of Finland*, by Frau von Weissenthurn.

The piece did not lack effective situations; but it was so overloaded with pathos, and the design was so obvious in every part, that the whole did not impress me favourably. The last act, however, pleased me much, and reconciled me to the rest.

[It caused him to reflect that, while poorly-drawn characters in plays gain in reality from being acted, well-drawn characters usually lose thereby.]

Monday, November 3, 1823.

I went to Goethe at five o'clock. I heard them, as I came upstairs, laughing very loud, and talking in the great room. The servant said that the Polish lady dined there to-day, and that the company had not yet left the table. I was going away; but he said he had orders to announce me, and that perhaps his master would be glad of my arrival, as it was now late. I waited a while, after which Goethe came out in a very cheerful mood, and took me to the opposite room. He had a bottle of wine brought, and filled for me, and occasionally for himself.

"Before I forget it," said he, looking about the table for something, "let me give you a concert-ticket. Madame Szymanowska gives, to-morrow evening, a public concert at the Stadthaus, and you must not fail to be there." I replied that I certainly should not repeat my late folly. "They say she plays very well," I added. "Admirably," said Goethe. "As well as Hummel?" asked I. "You must remember," said Goethe, "that she is not only a great performer, but a beautiful woman; and this lends a charm to all she does. Her execution is masterly—astonishing, indeed." "And has she also great power?" said I. "Yes," said he, "great power; and that is what we do not often find in ladies."

Secretary Kräuter came in to consult about the library. When he left us, Goethe praised his talent and integrity in business.

I then turned the conversation to the *Journey through Frankfort and Stuttgart into Switzerland, in* 1797, the manuscript of which he had lately given me, and which I had already diligently studied. I spoke of Goethe's and Meyer's reflections on the *subjects* of plastic art.

"Ay," said Goethe, "what can be more important than the subject, and what is all the science of art without it? All talent is wasted if the subject is unsuitable. It is because modern artists have no worthy subjects, that people are so hampered in all the art of modern times. From this cause we all suffer. I myself have not been able to renounce my modernness.

"Very few artists," he continued, "are clear on this point, or know what will really be satisfactory. For instance, they take my *Fisherman* as the subject of a picture, and do not think that it cannot be painted. In this ballad, nothing is expressed but the charm in water which tempts us to bathe in summer; there is nothing else in it: and how can that be painted?"

I mentioned how pleased I was to see how, in that journey, he had taken an interest in everything: shape and situation of mountains, with their species of stone; soil, rivers, clouds, air, wind, and weather; then cities, with their origin and growth, architecture, painting, theatres, municipal regulations and police, trade, economy, laying out of streets, varieties of human race, manner of living, peculiarities; then again, politics, martial affairs, and a hundred things beside.

He answered, "But you find no word upon music, because that was not within my sphere. Each traveller should know what he has to see, and what properly belongs to him, on a journey."

The Chancellor[1] came in. He talked a little with Goethe; and then spoke to me, kindly and with much acuteness, about a little paper he had lately read. He soon returned to the ladies, among whom I heard the sound of a piano.

When he had left us, Goethe spoke highly of him, and said, "All these excellent men, with whom you are now placed in so pleasant a relation, make what I call a home, to which one is always willing to return."

I said I already began to perceive the beneficial effect of my present situation, and found myself gradually leaving my ideal and theoretic tendencies and more and more able to appreciate the value of the present moment.

"It would be a pity," said Goethe, "if it were not so. Only persist in this, and hold fast by the present. Every situation—nay, every moment—is of infinite worth; for it is the representative of a whole eternity."

After a short pause, I turned the conversation to Tiefurt. "The subject," said I, "is complex, and it will be difficult to give it proper form. It would be most convenient to me to treat it in prose."

"For that," said Goethe, "the subject is not sufficiently significant. The so-called didactic, descriptive form, would, on the whole, be eligible; but even that is not perfectly appropriate. The best method will be to treat the subject in ten or twelve separate little poems—in rhyme; but in various measures and forms, such as the various sides and views demand, by which means light will be given to the whole." This advice I at once adopted as judicious. "Why, indeed," continued he, "should you not for once use dramatic means, and write a conversation or so with the gardener? By this fragmentary method you make your task easy, and can better bring out the characteristic sides of the subject. A great, comprehensive whole, on the other hand, is always difficult; and he who attempts it seldom produces anything complete."

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[1] Friedrich von Müller.

Monday, November 10, 1823.

Goethe has not been very well for the last few days; it seems he cannot get rid of a very bad cold. He coughs a great deal, very loud, and with much force; the cough seems to be painful, for he generally has his hand on his left side.

I passed half an hour with him this evening before the theatre. He sat in an arm-chair, with his back sunk in a cushion, and seemed to speak with difficulty.

After we had talked a little, he wished me to read a poem with which he intended to open a new number of *Kunst und Alterthum*. He remained sitting, and showed me where it was kept. I took the light, and sat down at his writing-table to read it, at a little distance.

This poem was singular; and, though I did not fully understand it on the first reading, it affected me strangely. The glorification of the Paria was its subject, and it was treated as a Trilogy. The prevailing tone seemed that of another world, and the mode of representation was such that I found it very difficult to form a notion of the subject. The presence of Goethe was also unfavourable to thorough abstraction: now I heard him cough; now I heard him sigh; and thus I was, as it were, divided in two—one half read, and the other felt his presence. I was forced to read the poem again and again, to get near it. However, the more I penetrated into it, the more significant and the higher in art did it seem.

At last I spoke to Goethe, as to both subject and treatment; and he gave me new light.

"Indeed," said he, "the treatment is very terse, and you must go deep into it to seize upon its meaning. It seems, even to me, like a Damascene blade hammered out of steel wire. I have borne this subject about with me for forty years; so that it has had time to get clear of everything extraneous."

"It will produce an effect," said I, "when it comes before the public."

"Ah, the public!" sighed Goethe.

"Would it not be well," said I, "to add an explanation as we do to pictures, when we endeavour to give life to what is present, by describing the preceding circumstances?"

"I think not," said he. "With pictures it is another matter; but, as a poem is already expressed in words, one word only cancels another."

I thought Goethe was here very happy in pointing out the rock on which those who interpret poems are commonly wrecked. Still it may be questioned whether it be not possible to avoid this rock, and to affix some explanatory words to a poem without injuring the delicacy of its inner life.

When I went away, he asked me to take the sheets of *Kunst und Alterthum* home with me, that I might read the poem again, and also the *Roses from the East* of Rückert, a poet whom he seems to value highly, and to regard with great expectation.

Wednesday, November 12, 1823.

Towards evening, I went to see Goethe; but heard, before I went upstairs, that the Prussian minister, von Humboldt, was with him—at which I was pleased, being convinced that this visit of an old friend would cheer him up and do him good.

I then went to the theatre, where *The Sisters of Prague*, got up to perfection, was done admirably, so that it was impossible to leave off laughing throughout.

Thursday, November 13, 1823.

Some days ago, as I was walking one fine afternoon towards Erfurt, I was joined by an elderly man; whom I supposed, from his appearance, to be an opulent citizen. We had not talked together long, before I asked him whether he knew Goethe. "Know him?" said he, with delight; "I was his valet almost twenty years!" He then launched into the praises of his former master. I begged to hear something of Goethe's youth, and he gladly consented to gratify me.

"When I first lived with him," said he, "he might have been about twenty-seven years old; he was thin, nimble, and elegant in his person. I could easily have carried him in my arms."

I asked whether Goethe, in that early part of his life here, had not been very gay. "Certainly," replied he; "he was always gay with the gay, but never when they passed a certain limit;

in that case he usually became grave. Always working and seeking; his mind always bent on art and science; that was generally the way with my master. The duke often visited him in the evening, and then they often talked on learned topics till late at night, so that I got extremely tired, and wondered when the duke would go. Even then he was interested in natural science.

"One time he rang in the middle of the night; and when I entered his room I found he had rolled his iron bed to the window, and was lying there, looking out upon the heavens. 'Have you seen nothing in the sky?' asked he; and when I answered 'No,' he bade me run to the guard-house, and ask the man on duty if he had seen nothing. I went there; the guard said he had seen nothing, and I returned with this answer to my master, who was still in the same position, lying in his bed, and gazing upon the sky. 'Listen,' said he; 'this is an important moment; there is now an earthquake, or one is just going to take place'; then he made me sit down on the bed, and showed me by what signs he knew this."

I asked the good old man "what sort of weather it was."

"It was very cloudy," he replied; "very still and sultry."

I asked if he at once believed there was an earthquake on Goethe's word.

"Yes," said he, "I believed it, for things always happened as he said they would. Next day he related his observations at court, when a lady whispered to her neighbour, 'Only listen, Goethe is dreaming.' But the duke, and all the men present, believed Goethe, and the correctness of his observations was soon confirmed; for, in a few weeks, the news came that a part of Messina, on that night, had been destroyed by an earthquake."

Friday, November 14, 1823.

Towards evening, Goethe sent me an invitation to call upon him. Humboldt, he said, was at court, and therefore I should be all the more welcome. I found him, as I did some days ago, sitting in his arm-chair. The chancellor soon joined us. We sat near Goethe, and carried on a light conversation, that he might only have to listen. The physician, Counsellor Rehbein, soon came also. To use his own expression, he found Goethe's pulse quite lively and easy. At this we were highly pleased, and joked with Goethe on the subject. "If I could only get rid of the pain in my left side!" he said. Rehbein prescribed a plaster; we talked on the good effect of such a remedy, and Goethe consented to it. Rehbein turned the conversation to Marienbad, and this appeared to awaken pleasant reminiscences in Goethe. Arrangements were made to go there again, it was said that the grand-duke would join the party, and these prospects put Goethe in the most cheerful mood. They also talked about Madame Szymanowska, and mentioned the time when she was here and all the men were solicitors for her favour.

When Rehbein was gone, the chancellor read the Indian poems, and Goethe meanwhile talked to me about the Marienbad Elegy.

At eight o'clock, the chancellor went; and I was going too, but Goethe bade me stop a little, and I sat down. The conversation turned on the stage, and the fact that *Wallenstein* was to be done to-morrow. This gave occasion to talk about Schiller.

"I have," said I, "a peculiar feeling towards Schiller. Some scenes of his great dramas I read with genuine love and admiration; but presently I meet with something that violates the truth of nature, and I can go no further. I feel this even in reading *Wallenstein*. I cannot but think that Schiller's turn for philosophy injured his poetry, because this led him to consider the idea far higher than all nature; indeed, thus to annihilate nature. What he could conceive must happen, whether it were in conformity with nature or not."

"It was sad," said Goethe, "to see how so highly gifted a man tormented himself with philosophical disquisitions which could in no way profit him. Humboldt has shown me letters Schiller wrote to him in those unblest days of speculation. There we see how he plagued himself with the design of perfectly separating sentimental from naïve poetry. For the former he could find no proper soil, and this brought him into unspeakable perplexity. As if," continued he, smiling, "sentimental poetry could exist at all without the naïve ground in which it has its root.

"It was not Schiller's plan," continued Goethe, "to go to work instinctively; he was forced to reflect on all he did. Hence he never could leave off talking about his poetical projects; and thus he discussed with me all his late pieces, scene after scene.

"On the other hand, it was contrary to my nature to talk over my poetic plans with anybody—even with Schiller. I carried everything about with me in silence, and usually nothing was known to anyone till the whole was completed. When

I showed Schiller my *Hermann and Dorothea* finished, he was astonished, for I had said not a syllable to him of any such plan.

"But I am curious to hear what you will say of *Wallenstein* to-morrow. You will see noble forms, and the piece will make an impression on you such as you probably do not dream of."

Saturday, November 15, 1823.

In the evening I was in the theatre, where I for the first time saw *Wallenstein*. Goethe had not said too much; the impression was great, and stirred my inmost soul. The actors, who had almost all belonged to the time when they were under the personal influence of Schiller and Goethe, gave an ensemble of significant personages, such as on a mere reading were not presented to my imagination. I could not get it out of my head the whole night.

Sunday, November 16, 1823.

In the evening at Goethe's; he was still sitting in his elbow-chair, and seemed rather weak. His first question was about *Wallenstein*. I gave him an account, which he heard with visible satisfaction.

M. Soret came in, led in by Frau von Goethe, and remained about an hour. He brought from the duke some gold medals, and by showing and talking about these seemed to entertain Goethe. Frau von Goethe and M. Soret went to court, and I was left alone with Goethe.

Remembering his promise to show me his Marienbad Elegy again, Goethe arose, put a light on the table, and gave me the poem. He quietly seated himself again, and left me to an undisturbed perusal.

After I had been reading a while, I turned to say something, but he seemed asleep. I therefore used the opportunity to read the poem again and again with rare delight. The most youthful glow of love, tempered by moral elevation of the mind, seemed to me its pervading characteristic. Then I thought that the feelings were more strongly expressed than we are accustomed to find in Goethe's other poems, and imputed this to the influence of Byron—which Goethe did not deny.

"You see the product of a highly impassioned mood," said he. "While I was in it I would not for the world have been without it, and now I would not for any consideration fall into it again.

"I wrote that poem immediately after leaving Marienbad, while the feeling of all I had experienced there was fresh. At eight in the morning, when we stopped at the first stage, I wrote down the first strophe; and thus I went on composing in the carriage, and writing down at every stage what I had just composed in my head, so that by the evening the whole was on paper. Thence it has a certain directness, and is poured out at once, which may be an advantage to it as a whole."

"It is," said I, "quite peculiar in its kind, and recalls no other poem of yours."

"That," said he, "may be because I staked upon the present moment as a man stakes a considerable sum upon a card, and sought to enhance its value as much as I could without exaggeration."

These words struck me as throwing light on Goethe's method and exhibiting his many-sidedness.

It was now near nine o'clock; Goethe bade me call Stadelmann.

He then let Stadelmann put the prescribed plaster on his left side. I turned to the window, but heard him lamenting that his illness was not lessening, but grew permanent. When the process was over, I sat down by him again for a little while. He now complained to me also that he had not slept for some nights, and had no appetite. "The winter," said he, "thus passes away; I can put nothing together; my mind has no force." I tried to soothe him, telling him not to think so much of his labours at present, and that he would soon be better. "Ah," said he, "I am not impatient; I have lived through too many such situations not to have learned to suffer and to endure." He was in his white flannel gown, and a woollen coverlet was laid on his knees and feet. "I shall not go to bed," he said, "but will pass the night thus in my chair, for I cannot properly sleep."

Meanwhile the time for my departure was come; he extended his dear hand to me, and I left.

When I went down into the servants' room, to fetch my cloak, I found Stadelmann much agitated. He said he was alarmed about his master, for if *he* complained, it was a bad sign indeed! His feet, too, which had lately been a little swollen, had suddenly become thin. He was "going to the physician early in the morning, to tell him these bad signs." I endeavoured to pacify him, but he would not be talked out of his fears.

Monday, November 17, 1823.

When I entered the theatre this evening, many persons pressed towards me, asking very anxiously how Goethe was.

News of his illness, perhaps exaggerated, must have spread rapidly over the town. Some said he had water on the chest. I felt depressed all the evening.

Wednesday, November 19, 1823.

Yesterday, I walked about in a state of great anxiety. Nobody besides his family was admitted to see him.

In the evening I went to his house, and he received me. I found him still in his arm-chair; his outward appearance was quite the same as when I left him on Sunday, but he was in good spirits.

We talked of Zauper, and the widely differing results which proceed from the study of ancient literature.

Friday, November 21, 1823.

Goethe sent for me. To my great joy I found him walking up and down in his chamber. He gave me a little book, the *Ghazels* of Count Platen. "I had intended," said he, "to say something of this in *Kunst und Alterthum*, for the poems deserve it; but my present condition will not allow me to do anything. Just see if you can fathom the poems and get anything out of them."

I promised to make the attempt.

"*Ghazels*," continued he, "have this peculiarity, that they demand great fulness of meaning. The constantly-recurring similar rhymes must find ready for them a store of similar thoughts. Therefore it is not everyone that succeeds in them; but these will please you." The physician came in, and I departed.

Monday, November 24, 1823.

Saturday and Sunday I studied the poems: this morning I wrote down my view of them, and sent it to Goethe; for I had heard that nobody had been admitted to him for some days, the physician having forbidden him to talk.

However, he sent for me this evening. When I entered, I found a chair already placed for me near him. He began immediately to speak of my little critique. "I was much pleased with it," said he; "you have a fine talent. I wish now to tell you something," he continued; "if literary proposals should be made to you from other quarters, refuse them, or at least consult me before deciding upon them."

I replied that I wished to belong to him alone, and had at present no reason to think of new connections.

We then talked of the *Ghazels*. Goethe expressed his delight at the completeness of these poems, and that our present literature produced so much that was good.

"I wish," said he, "to recommend the newest talent to your especial study and observation. I wish you to become acquainted with whatever our literature brings forth worthy of note, and to place before me whatever is meritorious, that we may discuss it in the numbers of *Kunst und Alterthum*, and mention what is good, sound, and elevated, with due acknowledgment. For, with the best intentions, I cannot, at my advanced age, and with my manifold duties, do this without aid from others."

He sent me the latest literary periodicals to assist in the proposed task. I did not go to him for several days, nor was I invited. I heard his friend Zelter had come to visit him.

Monday, December 1, 1823.

To-day, I was invited to dine with Goethe. I found Zelter sitting with him when I arrived. Both advanced to meet me, and gave me their hands. "Here," said Goethe, "we have my friend Zelter. In him you make a valuable acquaintance. I shall send you soon to Berlin; he will take excellent care of you." "Is Berlin a good place?" said I. "Yes," replied Zelter, laughing; "a great deal may be learned and unlearned there."

We sat down and talked on various subjects. I asked after Schubarth. "He visits me at least every week," said Zelter. "He is married now, but has no appointment, because he has offended the philologists in Berlin."

Zelter asked me then if I knew Immermann. I said I had often heard his name, but as yet knew nothing of his writings. "I made his acquaintance at Münster," said Zelter; "he is a very hopeful young man, and it is a pity that his appointment leaves him no more time for his art." Goethe also praised his talent. "But we must see," said he, "how he comes out; whether he will submit to purify his taste, and, with respect to form, adopt the acknowledged best models as his standard. His original striving has its merit, but leads astray too easily."

Little Walter now came jumping in, asking many questions, of both Zelter and his grandfather. "When thou comest, uneasy spirit," said Goethe, "all conversation is spoiled." However, he loves the boy, and was unwearied in satisfying his wishes.

Frau von Goethe and Fräulein Ulrica now came in, and with them young Goethe, in his uniform with sword, ready for court. We sat down to table. Fräulein Ulrica and Zelter were very gay, rallied each other during the whole of dinner. Zelter, a healthy, happy man, could give himself up wholly to the moment, and always had the word for the occasion—sometimes giving a hard hit. He imparted to others his own freedom of spirit, so that all narrowing views were soon dispelled by his presence. He went away soon after dinner, to visit the grand-duchess.

Thursday, December 4, 1823.

This morning, Secretary Kräuter brought me an invitation to dine with Goethe; at the same time, by Goethe's desire, giving me a hint to present Zelter with a copy of my *Beyträge zur Poesie.* I took the copy to him at his hotel. Zelter, in return, put Immermann's poems into my hands. "I would willingly make you a present of this copy," said he, "but, you see, the author has dedicated it to me, and I must therefore keep it as a valuable memorial."

Before dinner, I walked with Zelter through the park towards Upper Weimar.

"If I am to compose music for a poem," said he, "I first try to bring before me a living picture of the situation. I then read it aloud till I know it by heart; and thus, when I again recite it, the melody comes of its own accord."

About two, I returned to dinner, and found Goethe and Zelter looking at engravings of Italian scenery. Frau von Goethe came in, and we sat down to dinner. Fräulein Ulrica was absent; and so was young Goethe, who just came in to say Good-day, and then returned to court.

Many anecdotes were told by both Zelter and Goethe, illustrating the peculiarities of their common friend, Friedrich August Wolf, of Berlin. There was a great deal of talk about the *Nibelungen*, and then about Lord Byron and his hoped-for visit to Weimar, in which Frau von Goethe took especial interest. The Rochus festival at Bingen was also a very cheerful subject; and Zelter remembered two beautiful girls, the memory of whom seemed still to exhilarate him. Goethe's social song, *Kriegsglück* (Fortune of War), was then gaily talked over. Zelter was inexhaustible in his anecdotes of wounded soldiers and beautiful women, and they all tended to show the truthfulness of the poem. Goethe himself said that he had had no need to go far for such realities; he had seen them all at Weimar.

Frau von Goethe maintained a lively opposition, saying that she would not admit women were so bad as that "nasty" poem represented them.

When I was alone with Goethe, he asked me about Zelter. "Well," said he, "how do you like him? On a first acquaintance, he may appear blunt, even rough; but that is only external. I scarcely know any man who is really so tender as Zelter. Besides, we must not forget that he has passed more than half a century in Berlin; where there is such an audacious set that one cannot get on well with delicacy, but must have one's eyes wide open and be a little rough now and then, only to keep one's head above water."

(Sup). Wednesday, December 31, 1823.

Dined at Goethe's; conversing on various subjects. He showed me a portfolio containing sketches; amongst which the first attempts of Henry Füssli[1] were especially remarkable.

We then spoke upon religious subjects, and the abuse of the divine name. "People treat it," said Goethe, "as if that incomprehensible and most high Being, who is even beyond the reach of thought, were only their equal. Otherwise, they would not say the *Lord God*, the *dear God*,[2] the *good God*. This expression becomes to them, especially to the clergy, who have it daily in their mouths, a mere phrase, a barren name. If they were impressed by His greatness they would be dumb, and through veneration unwilling to name Him."

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[1] That is, Fuseli, as we call him.—J. O.

[2] "The *dear* God" (der liebe Gott) is one of the commonest German expressions.—J. O.

1824

(Sup.) Friday, January 2, 1824.

DINED at Goethe's, and enjoyed cheerful conversation. Mention was made of a young beauty belonging to the Weimar society, when one of the guests remarked that he was on the point of falling in love with her although her understanding could not exactly be called brilliant.

"Pshaw," said Goethe, laughing, "as if love had anything to do with the understanding. The things that we love in a young lady are something very different from the understanding. We love in her: beauty, youthfulness, playfulness, trustingness, her character, her faults, her caprices, and God knows what '*je ne sais quoi*' besides; but we do not *love* her understanding. We respect her understanding when it is brilliant, and by it the worth of a girl can be infinitely enhanced in our eyes. Understanding may also serve to fix our affections when we already love; but the understanding is not that which is capable of firing our hearts, and awakening a passion."

After dinner, and when the rest of the party had departed, I remained sitting with Goethe.

We discoursed upon English literature, on the greatness of Shakespeare; and on the unfavourable position held by all English dramatic authors who had appeared after that poetical giant.

"A dramatic talent of any importance," said Goethe, "could not forbear to notice Shakespeare's works; nay, could not forbear to study them. Having studied them, he must be aware that Shakespeare has already exhausted the whole of human nature in all its tendencies, in all its heights and depths, and that in fact there remains for him, the aftercomer, nothing more to do. And how get courage only to put pen to paper, if conscious, in an earnest appreciating spirit, that such unfathomable and unattainable excellences were already in existence!

"It fared better with me fifty years ago in my own dear Germany. I could soon come to an end with all that then existed; it could not long awe me, or occupy my attention. I soon left German literature behind me, and turned to life and to production. So on and on I went in my own natural development, and at every step my standard was not much higher than what at such step I was able to attain. But had I been born an Englishman, and had all those numerous masterpieces been brought before me in all their power, at my first dawn of youthful consciousness, they would have overpowered me, and I should not have known what to do. I could not have gone on with such fresh light-heartedness; but should have had to bethink myself, and look about for a long time, to find some new outlet."

I turned the conversation back to Shakespeare. "When he is disengaged from English literature," said I, "and considered as transformed into a German, his greatness seems a miracle. But in the soil of his country, and the atmosphere of his century; studied with his contemporaries and immediate successors—Ben Jonson, Massinger, Marlowe, and Beaumont and Fletcher—Shakespeare, though still a being of the most exalted magnitude, appears in some measure accessible. Much is due to the powerfully productive atmosphere of his time."

"You are right," returned Goethe. "It is with Shakespeare as with the mountains of Switzerland. Transplant Mont Blanc at once into the large plain of Luneburg Heath, and we should find no words to express our wonder at its magnitude. Seek it, however, in its gigantic home; go to it over its immense neighbours, the Jungfrau, the Finsteraarhorn, the Eiger, the Wetterhorn, St. Gothard, and Monte Rosa; Mont Blanc will indeed still remain a giant, but it will no longer produce in us such amazement.

"Besides, let him who will not believe," continued Goethe, "that much of Shakespeare's greatness appertains to his great vigorous time, only ask himself the question, whether a phenomenon so astounding would be possible in the present England of 1824, in these evil days of criticizing and hair-splitting journals?

"That undisturbed, innocent, somnambulatory production, by which alone anything great can thrive, is no longer possible. Our talents lie before the public. Daily criticisms in fifty different places, and gossip caused by them, prevent the appearance of any sound production. He who does not keep aloof from all this, and isolate himself by main force, is lost. Through the bad, chiefly negative, æsthetical and critical tone of the journals, a sort of half-culture finds its way into the masses; but to productive talent it is a noxious mist, a dropping poison, which destroys the tree of creative power—from the ornamental green leaves, to the deepest pith and the most hidden fibres.

"And then how tame and weak has life itself become during the last two shabby centuries. Where do we now meet an original nature? where is the man with strength to be true, and to show himself as he is? This, however, affects the poet; who must find all within himself, while he is left in the lurch by all without."

The conversation now turned on *Werther*. "That," said Goethe, "is a creation which I, like the pelican, fed with the blood of my own heart. It contains so much from the innermost recesses of my breast that it might easily be spread into a novel of ten such volumes. Besides, I have only read the book once since its appearance, and have taken good care not to read it again. It is a mass of congreve-rockets. I am uncomfortable when I look at it; and I dread lest I should once more experience the peculiar mental state from which it was produced."

I reminded him of his conversation with Napoleon, of which I knew by the sketch amongst his unpublished papers, which I had repeatedly urged him to give more in detail. "Napoleon," said I, "pointed out to you a passage in *Werther*, which, it appeared to him, would not stand a strict examination; and this you allowed. I should much like to know what passage he meant."

"Guess!" said Goethe, with a mysterious smile.

"Now," said I, "I almost think it is where Charlotte sends the pistols to Werther, without saying a word to Albert, and without imparting to him her misgivings and apprehensions. You have given yourself great trouble to find a motive for this silence, but it does not appear to hold good against the urgent necessity where the life of the friend was at stake."

"Your remark," returned Goethe, "is really not bad; but I do not think it right to reveal whether Napoleon meant this passage or another. However, be that as it may, your observation is quite as correct as his."

I asked whether the great effect produced by the appearance of *Werther* were really to be attributed to the period. "I cannot," said I, "reconcile to myself this view, though it is so extensively spread. *Werther* made an epoch because it appeared—not because it appeared at a certain time. There is in every period so much unexpressed sorrow—so much secret discontent and disgust with life, and in single individuals there are so many disagreements with the world—so many conflicts between their natures and civil regulations, that *Werther* would make an epoch even if it appeared to-day for the first time."

"You are quite right," said Goethe; "it is on that account that the book to this day influences youth of a certain age, as it did formerly. It was scarcely necessary for me to deduce my own youthful dejection from the general influence of my time, and from the reading of a few English authors. Rather was it owing to individual and immediate circumstances which touched me to the quick, and gave me a great deal of trouble, and indeed brought me into that frame of mind which produced *Werther*. I had lived, loved, and suffered much—that was it.

"On considering more closely the much-talked-of *Werther* period, we discover that it belongs, not to the course of universal culture, but to the career of every individual who, with an innate free natural instinct, must accommodate himself to the narrow limits of an antiquated world. Obstructed fortune restrained activity, unfulfilled wishes, are the calamities not of any particular time but of every individual man; and it would be bad indeed if everybody had not, once in his life, known a time when *Werther* seemed as if it had been written for him alone."

(Sup.) Sunday, January 4, 1824.

To-day, after dinner, Goethe went with me through a portfolio of works by Raphael. He often busies himself with Raphael, in order to keep up intercourse with what is best At the same time, it gives him pleasure to introduce me to such things.

We afterwards spoke about the *Divan* [1]—especially about the "book of ill-humour," in which much that he carried in his heart against his enemies is poured forth.

"I have, however," continued he, "been very moderate: i I had uttered all that vexed me or gave me trouble, the few pages would soon have swelled to a volume.

"People were never thoroughly contented with me, bu always wished me otherwise than it has pleased God to mak me. They were also seldom contented with my productions When I had long exerted my whole soul to favour the world with a new work, it still desired that I should thank it into th bargain for considering the work endurable. If anybod praised me, I was not allowed to receive it as a well-merited tribute; but people expected from me some modest expression, humbly setting forth the total unworthiness of my person and my work. I should have been a miserable hypocrite if I had so tried to lie and dissemble. Since I was strong enough to show myself in my whole truth, just as I felt, I was deemed proud, and am considered so to the present day.

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[1] Goethe's *West-östliche* (west-eastern) *Divan*, one of the twelve division of which is entitled *Das Buch des Unmuths* (The Book of Ill-Humour —J. O.

"In religious, scientific, and political matters, I generally brought trouble upon myself, because I was no hypocrite, and had the courage to express what I felt.

"I believed in God and in Nature, and in the triumph of good over evil; but this was not enough for pious souls: I was also required to believe other points, which were opposed to the feeling of my soul for truth; besides, I did not see that these would be of the slightest service to me.

"It was also prejudicial to me that I discovered Newton's theory of light and colour to be an error, and that I had the courage to contradict the universal creed. I discovered light in its purity and truth, and I considered it my duty to fight for it. The opposite party, however, did their utmost to darken the light; for they maintained that *shade is a part of light*. It sounds absurd when I express it; but so it is: for they said that *colours*, which are shadow and the result of shade, *are light itself*, or, which amounts to the same thing, *are the beams of light, broken now in one way, now in another*."

Goethe was silent, whilst an ironical smile spread over his expressive countenance. He continued:

"And now for political matters. What trouble I have taken, and what I have suffered, on that account, I cannot tell you. Do you know my *Aufgeregten*[1]?"

"Yesterday, for the first time," returned I, "I read the piece, in consequence of the new edition of your works; and I regret from my heart that it remains unfinished. But, even as it is, every right-thinking person must coincide with your sentiments."

"I wrote it at the time of the French Revolution," continued Goethe; "and it may be regarded as my political confession of faith at that time. I have taken the countess as a type of the nobility; and, with the words put into her mouth, I have expressed how the nobility really ought to think. The countess has just returned from Paris; she has there been an eye-witness of the revolutionary events, and has drawn, therefore, for herself, no bad doctrine. She has convinced herself that the people may be ruled, but not oppressed, and that the revolutionary outbreaks of the lower classes are the consequence of the injustice of the higher classes. 'I will for the future,' says she, 'strenuously avoid every action that appears to me unjust, and will, both in society and at court, loudly express my opinion concerning such actions in others. In no case of injustice will I be silent, even though I should be cried down as a democrat.'

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[1] *Die Aufgeregten* (The Agitated, in a political sense) is an unfinished drama by Goethe.—J. O.

"I should have thought this sentiment perfectly respectable," continued Goethe; "it was mine at that time, and it is so still; but as a reward for it, I was endowed with all sorts of titles, which I do not care to repeat."

"We need only read *Egmont*," answered I, "to discover what you think. I know no German piece in which the freedom of the people is more advocated."

"Sometimes," said Goethe, "people do not like to look on me as I am, but turn their glances from everything that could show me in my true light. Schiller, on the contrary—who, between ourselves, was much more of an aristocrat than I am, but who considered what he said more than I—had the wonderful fortune to be looked upon as a particular friend of the people. I give it up to him with all my heart, and console myself with the thought that others before me have fared no better.

"It is true that I could be no friend to the French Revolution; its horrors were too near me, and shocked me daily and hourly, whilst its benefits were not then apparent. Neither could I be indifferent to the endeavours of Germans to bring about, here, artificially, such scenes as were, in France, the consequence of a great necessity.

"But I was as little a friend to arbitrary rule. Indeed, I was perfectly convinced that a great revolution is never a fault of the people, but always of the government. Revolutions are utterly impossible as long as governments are constantly just and constantly vigilant; so that they may anticipate them by improvements at the right time, and not hold out until they are forced to yield by the pressure from beneath.

"Because I hated the Revolution, the name of the '*Friend of the established order*' was bestowed upon me. That is, however, a very ambiguous title, which I beg to decline. Since, with much that is good, there is also much that is bad, unjust, and imperfect, a friend of the established order means often little less than the friend of the obsolete and bad.

"But human affairs wear every fifty years a different aspect; so that an arrangement which in the year 1800 was perfection may perhaps in the year 1850 be a defect.

"And, furthermore, nothing is good for a nation but that which arises from its own core and its own general wants, without apish imitation of another; since what to one race of people, of a certain age, is nutriment, may prove poison for another. All endeavours to introduce any foreign innovation, the necessity for which is not rooted in the core of the nation itself, are therefore foolish; and all premeditated revolutions of the kind are unsuccessful, *for they are without God, who keeps aloof from such bungling.* If, however, there exists an actual necessity for a great reform amongst a people, God is with it, and it prospers. He was visibly with Christ and his first adherents; for the appearance of the new doctrine of love was a necessity to the people. He was also visibly with Luther; for the purification of the doctrine corrupted by the priests was no less a necessity. Neither of the great powers whom I have named was, however, a friend of the established order; much more were both of them convinced that the old leaven must be got rid of, and that it would be impossible to go on and remain in the untrue, unjust, and defective way."

Tuesday, January 27, 1824.

Goethe talked with me about the continuation of his memoirs, with which he is now busy. He observed, that this later period of his life would not be narrated with such minuteness as the youthful epoch of *Dichtung und Wahrheit.*[1] "I must," said he, "treat this later period more in the fashion of annals: my outward actions must appear rather than my inward life. Altogether, the most important part of an individual's life is that of development, and mine is concluded in the detailed volumes of *Dichtung und Wahrheit.* Afterwards begins the conflict with the world, and that is interesting only in its results.

"And then the life of a learned German—what is it? What may have been really good in my case cannot be communicated, and what can be communicated is not worth the trouble. Besides, where are the hearers whom one could entertain with any satisfaction?

"When I look back to the earlier and middle periods of my life, and now in my old age think how few are left of those who were young with me, I think of a summer residence at a bathing-place. When you arrive, you make friends of those who have already been there some time, and who leave in a few weeks. The loss is painful. Then you turn to the second generation, with which you live a good while, and become most intimate. But this goes also, and leaves us alone with the third, which comes just as we are going away, and with which we have really nothing to do.

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[1] *Poetry and Truth,* the title of Goethe's autobiography.—J. O.

"I have ever been esteemed one of Fortune's chiefest favourites; nor will I complain or find fault with the course my life has taken. Yet, truly, there has been nothing but toil and care; and I may say that, in all my seventy-five years, I have never had a month of genuine comfort. It has been the perpetual rolling of a stone, which I have always had to raise anew. My annals will render clear what I now say. The claims upon my activity, from both within and without, were too numerous.

"My real happiness was my poetic meditation and production. But how was this disturbed, limited, and hindered by my external position! Had I been able to abstain more from public business, and to live more in solitude, I should have been happier, and should have accomplished much more as a poet. But, soon after my *Goetz* and *Werther*, that saying of a sage was verified for me—'If you do anything for the sake of the world, it will take good care that you shall not do it a second time.'

"A wide-spread celebrity, an elevated position in life, are good things. But, for all my rank and celebrity, I am still obliged to be silent as to the opinion of others, that I may not give offence. This would be but poor sport, if by this means I had not the advantage of learning the thoughts of others without their being able to learn mine."

Sunday, February 15, 1824.

Goethe invited me to take a walk before dinner to-day. I found him at breakfast when I entered the room: he seemed in excellent spirits.

"I have had a pleasant visit," said he cheerfully. "A promising young Westphalian, named Meyer, has just been with me. He has written poems that warrant high expectations. He is only eighteen, and has made incredible progress.

"I am glad," continued he, smiling, "that I am not eighteen now. When I was eighteen, Germany was in its teens also, and something could be done; but now an incredible deal is demanded, and every avenue is barred.

"Germany itself stands so high in every department, that we can scarcely survey all it has done; and now we must be Greeks and Latins, and English and French into the bargain. Not content with this, some have the madness of pointing to the East also; and surely this is enough to confuse a young man's head!

"I have, by way of consolation, shown him my colossal Juno, as a token that he had best stick to the Greeks, and find consolation there. He is a fine young man; and, if he takes care not to dissipate his energies, something will be made of him. However, as I said before, I thank Heaven that I am not young in so thoroughly finished a time. I could not stay here. Nay, if I sought refuge in America, I should come too late, for there is now too much light even there."

Sunday, February 22, 1824.

Dined with Goethe and his son. The latter related some pleasant stories of the time when he was a student at Heidelberg. He had often been with his friends on an excursion along the Rhine, in his vacations, and especially cherished the remembrance of a landlord at whose house he and ten other students had once passed the night and who provided them with wine gratis—merely that he might share the pleasures of a "Commerz."[1]

After dinner, Goethe showed us some coloured drawings of Italian scenery; especially that of Northern Italy, with the adjoining Swiss mountains, and the Lago Maggiore. The Borromean Isles were reflected in the water; near the shore were skiffs and fishing-tackle, which led Goethe to remark that this was the lake in the *Wanderjahre*. On the north-west, towards Monte Rosa, stood the hills bordering the lake in black-blue heavy masses, as we see them soon after sunset.

I remarked that, to me, who had been born in the plains, the gloomy sublimity of these masses produced an uncomfortable feeling, and that I by no means desired to explore such wild recesses.

"That feeling is natural," said Goethe. "Really that state alone is suitable to man, in which and for which he was born. He who is not led abroad by great objects is far happier at home. Switzerland, at first, made so great an impression upon me, that it disturbed and confused me. Only after repeated visits—only in after years, when I visited those mountains merely as a mineralogist—could I feel at my ease among them."

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[1] The academical word for a students' drinking party.—J. O.

Afterwards we looked at a long series of copperplates from pictures by modern artists in one of the French galleries. The invention displayed in these pictures was almost uniformly weak, and among forty we found barely four or five good ones. These were: a girl dictating a love-letter; a woman in a house to let, which nobody will take; "catching fish"; and musicians before an image of the Madonna. A landscape in Poussin's manner was not bad; on looking at this, Goethe said, "Such artists get a general idea of Poussin's landscapes, and work upon that. We cannot style their pictures good or bad: they are not bad, because through every part you catch glimpses of an excellent model. But you cannot call them good, because the artists usually want the great personal peculiarity of Poussin. It is just so among poets, and there are some who for instance would make a very poor figure in Shakespeare's grand style."

We ended by examining, and talking over for a long while, Rauch's model of Goethe's statue, which is designed for Frankfort.

Tuesday, February 24, 1824.

I went to Goethe's at one o'clock to-day. He showed me some manuscripts, which he had dictated for the first number of the fifth volume of *Kunst und Alterthum*. I found that he had written an appendix to my critique of the German *Paria*, in reference both to the French tragedy and to his own lyrical trilogy, by which this subject was to a certain extent completed.

"You were quite right," said he, "to avail yourself of the occasion of your critique to become acquainted with Indian matters, since in the end we retain from our studies only that which we practically apply."

I agreed with him, and said that I had made this experience at the university; since, of all that was said in the lectures, I had only retained that of which I could make a practical application; on the contrary, I had completely forgotten all that I had been unable to reduce to practice. "I have," said I, "heard Heeren's lectures on ancient and modern history, and know now nothing about the matter. But if I studied a period of history for the sake of treating it dramatically, what I learned would be safely secured to me for ever."

"Altogether," said Goethe, "they teach in academies far too many things, and far too much that is useless. Then the individual professors extend their departments too much—far beyond the wants of their hearers. In former days lectures were read in chemistry and botany as belonging to medicine, and the physician could manage them. Now, both these have become so extensive that each of them requires a life; yet acquaintance with both is expected from the physician. Nothing can come of this; one thing must be neglected and forgotten for the sake of the other. He who is wise puts aside all claims that may dissipate his attention, confines himself to one branch, and excels there."

As to Byron's *Cain*, Goethe then showed me a short critique he had written.

"We see," he said, "how the inadequate dogmas of the church work upon a free mind like Byron's, and how by such a piece he struggles to get rid of a doctrine which has been forced upon him. The English clergy will not thank him; but I shall be surprised if he does not go on treating biblical subjects of similar import, and if he lets slip a subject like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah."

After these literary observations, Goethe directed my attention to plastic art, by showing me an antique gem of which he had expressed admiration the day before. I was enchanted to observe the *naïveté* of the design. I saw a man who had taken a heavy vessel from his shoulder to give a boy drink. But the boy finds it is not bent down conveniently for him; the drink will not flow; and while he has laid both his little hands on the vessel, he looks up to the man, and seems to ask him to incline it a little more towards him.

"Now, how do you like that?" said Goethe. "We moderns," continued he, "feel well enough the beauty of such a perfectly natural, naïve *motif*; we have the knowledge how such a thing is to be brought about, but we cannot do it; the understanding is always uppermost, and this enchanting grace is always wanting."

We looked then at a medal by Brandt of Berlin, representing young Theseus taking the arms of his father from under the stone. The attitude had much that was commendable, but we found the limbs not sufficiently strained to lift such a burden. It seemed, too, a mistake for the youth to have the arms in one hand while he lifted the stone with the other; for, according to the nature of things, he would first roll aside the heavy stone, and then take up the arms. "By way of contrast," said Goethe, "I will show you a gem whereon the same subject is treated by an ancient."

He bade Stadelmann bring a box containing several hundred copies of antique gems, which he had brought with him from Rome, on the occasion of his travels in Italy. I then saw the same subject, treated by an old Greek—and how different it was! The youth was exerting his whole strength upon the stone, and was equal to the task; for the weight was already visibly overcome, and the stone was raised to that point where it would soon be cast aside. All his bodily powers were directed by the young hero against the heavy mass; only his looks were fixed on the arms which lay beneath.

"Meyer," said Goethe, laughing, "always says, 'If thinking were not so hard.' And the worst is, that all the thinking in the world does not bring us to thought; we must be right by nature, so that good thoughts may come before us like free children of God, and cry, 'Here we are.'"

Wednesday, February 25, 1824.

To-day, Goethe showed me two remarkable poems; both highly moral in their tendency, but in their several *motifs* so unreservedly natural and true, that they are of the kind which the world styles immoral. On this account, he keeps them to himself, and does not intend to publish them.

"Could intellect and high cultivation," said he, "become the property of all, the poet would have fair play; he could be always thoroughly true, and would not be compelled to fear uttering his best thoughts. But, as it is, he must always keep on a certain level; must remember that his works will fall into the hands of a mixed society, and must therefore take care lest by over-great openness he may give offence to the majority of good men. Then, Time is a whimsical tyrant, which in every century has a different face for all that one says and does. We cannot with propriety say things that were permitted to the ancient Greeks; and the Englishmen of 1820 cannot endure what suited the vigorous contemporaries of Shakespeare, so that at the present day it is found necessary to have a Family Shakespeare."

"Then," said I, "there is much in the form also. Of these two poems, the one composed in the style and metre of the ancients would be far less offensive than the other. Isolated parts would displease, but the treatment throws so much grandeur and dignity over the whole that we seem to hear a strong ancient and to be carried back to the age of the Greek heroes. But the other, being in the style and metre of Messer Ariosto, is far more hazardous. It relates an event of our day in the language of our day; and, as it thus comes quite unveiled into our presence, the particular features seem far more audacious."

"You are right," said he; "mysterious and great effects are produced by different poetical forms. If the import of my Roman elegies were put into the measure and style of Byron's *Don Juan*, the whole would be found infamous."

The French newspapers were brought. The campaign of the French in Spain under the duke D'Angoulême, which was just ended, had great interest for Goethe. "I must praise the Bourbons for this measure," said he; "they had not really gained the throne till they had gained the army, and that is now accomplished. The soldier returns with loyalty to his king; for he has, from his own victories and the discomfitures of the many-headed Spanish host, learned the difference between obeying one and many. The army has sustained its ancient fame, and shown that it is brave in itself and can conquer without Napoleon."

Goethe then talked of the Prussian army in the Seven Years' War; which, accustomed by Frederick the Great to constant victory, grew careless, so that in after days it lost many battles from over-confidence. All the minutest details were present to his mind, and I had reason to admire his excellent memory.

"I had the great advantage," said he, "of being born at a time when the greatest events that agitated the world occurred, and such have continued to occur during my long life; so that I am a living witness of the Seven Years' War, of the separation of America from England, of the French Revolution, and of the whole Napoleon era—with the downfall of that hero, and the events that followed. Thus I have attained results and insight impossible to those who are born now and must learn all these things from books that they will not understand.

"What the next years will bring I cannot predict; but I fear we shall not soon have repose. It is not given to the world to be contented; the great are not such that there will be no abuse of power; the masses not such that in hope of gradual improvement they will be contented with a moderate condition. Could we perfect human nature, we might also expect a perfect state of things; but, as it is, there will always be a wavering hither and thither; one part must suffer while the other is at ease, envy and egotism will be always at work like bad demons, and party strife will be without end.

"The most reasonable way is for everybody to follow his own vocation, to which he has been born and which he has learned, and to avoid hindering others from following theirs. Let the shoemaker abide by his last, the peasant by his plough, and let the king know how to govern; for this also is a business which must be learned, and with which nobody who does not understand it should meddle."

Returning to the French papers, Goethe said—"The liberals may speak, for when they are reasonable we like to hear them; but with the royalists, who have the executive power in their hands, talking comes amiss—they should act. They may march troops, and behead and hang—that is all right; but attacking opinions, and justifying their measures in public prints, does not become them. If there were a public of kings, they might talk.

"For myself," he continued, "I have always been a royalist. I have let others babble, and have done as I saw fit. I understood my course, and knew my own object. If I committed a fault as a single individual, I could make it good again; but if I committed it jointly with three or four others, it would be impossible to make it good, for among many there are many opinions."

He showed me Frau von Spiegel's album, in which he had written some very beautiful verses. A place had been left open for him for two years, and he rejoiced at having been able to perform at last an old promise. After I had read the *Poem to Frau von Spiegel*, I turned over the leaves of the book, in which I found many distinguished names. On the very next page was a poem by Tiedge, written in the very spirit and style of his *Urania*. "In a saucy mood," said Goethe, "I was on the point of writing some verses beneath those; but I am glad I did not. It would not have been the first time that by rash expressions I had repelled good people and spoiled the effect of my best works.

"However," continued Goethe, "I have had to endure not a little from Tiedge's *Urania*; for at one time nothing was sung and nothing was declaimed but this same *Urania*. Wherever you went, you found *Urania* on the table. *Urania* and immortality were the topics of every conversation. I would by no means dispense with the happiness of believing in a future existence, and indeed would say with Lorenzo de Medici that those are dead even for this life who hope for no other. But such incomprehensible matters lie too far off to be a theme of daily speculation. Let him who believes in immortality enjoy his happiness in silence, he has no reason to give himself airs about it. The occasion of Tiedge's *Urania* led me to observe that piety, like nobility, has its aristocracy. I met stupid women, who plumed themselves on believing, with Tiedge, in immortality; and I was forced to bear much dark examination on this point. They were vexed by my saying I should be well pleased if after the close of this life we were blessed with another, only I hoped I should hereafter meet none of those who had believed in it here. For how should I be tormented! The pious would throng around me, and say, 'Were we not right? Did we not predict it? Has not it happened just as we said?' And so there would be ennui without end even in the other world.

"This preoccupation with immortality," he continued, "is for people of rank, and especially ladies, who have nothing to do. But an able man, who has something regular to do here, and must toil and struggle and produce day by day, leaves the future world to itself, and is active and useful in this. Thoughts about immortality are also good for those who have not been very successful here; and I would wager that, if the good Tiedge had enjoyed a better lot, he would also have had better thoughts."

Thursday, February 26, 1824.

I dined with Goethe. After the cloth had been removed, he bade Stadelmann bring in some large portfolios of copperplates. Some dust had collected on the covers, and, as no suitable cloths were at hand to wipe it away, Goethe was much displeased, and scolded Stadelmann. "I tell you for the last time," said he, "if you do not go this very day to buy the cloths for which I have asked so often, I will go myself to-morrow; and you shall see that I will keep my word." Stadelmann went.

"A similar case occurred to me with Becker, the actor," added Goethe to me, in a lively tone, "when he refused to take the part of a trooper in *Wallenstein*. I gave him warning that, if he would not play the part, I would play it myself. That did the business; for they knew me at the theatre well enough, and were aware that I did not understand jesting in such matters, and also that I was mad enough to keep my word."

"And would you really have played the part?" asked I.

"Yes," said Goethe, "I would have played it, and would have eclipsed Herr Becker too, for I knew the part better than he did."

We then opened the portfolios. "This," said Goethe, "is the way to cultivate taste. Taste is only to be educated by contemplation, not of the tolerably good, but of the truly excellent. I show you only the best works; and, when you are grounded in these, you will have a standard for the rest, which you will know how to value, without overrating them. And I show you the best in each class, that you may perceive that no class is to be despised, but that each gives delight when a man of genius attains its highest point. For instance, this piece, by a French artist, is *galant*, to a degree you see nowhere else, and is therefore a model in its way."

Goethe handed me the engraving: a beautiful room in a summer residence, with open doors and windows looking into a garden, where the most graceful figures were visible. A handsome lady, aged about thirty, was sitting with a music book, from which she seemed to have just sung. Sitting by her, a little farther back, was a girl of about fifteen. At the open window behind stood another young lady, holding a lute, which she seemed still to be sounding. At this moment a young gentleman was entering, to whom the eyes of the ladies were directed. He seemed to have interrupted the music; and his slight bow gave the notion that he was making an apology, which the ladies were gratified to hear.

"That, I think," said Goethe, "is as *galant* as any piece of Calderon's; and you have now seen the very best thing of this kind. But what say you to this?"

He handed me some etchings by Roos, the famous painter of animals; they were all of sheep, in every posture and situation. The simplicity of their countenances, the ugliness and shagginess of the fleece, were represented with the utmost fidelity to nature.

"I always feel uneasy," said Goethe, "when I look at these beasts. Their state, so limited, dull, gaping, and dreaming, excites in me such sympathy, that I fear I shall become a sheep, and almost think the artist must have been one. At all events, it is most wonderful how Roos has been able to think and feel himself into the very soul of these creatures, so as to make the internal character peer with such force through the outward covering. Here you see what a great talent can do when it keeps steady to subjects which are congenial with its nature."

"Has not, then," said I, "this artist also painted dogs, cats, and beasts of prey, with similar truth; nay, with this great gift of assuming a mental state foreign to himself, has he not been able to delineate human character with equal fidelity?"

"No," said Goethe, "all that lay out of his sphere; but the gentle grass-eating animals—sheep, goats, cows, and the like—he was never weary of repeating; this was the peculiar province of his talent, which he did not quit during the whole course of his life. And in this he did well. A sympathy with these animals was born with him, a knowledge of their psychological condition was given him, and thus he had so fine an eye for their bodily structure. Other creatures were perhaps not so transparent to him, and therefore he felt no impulse to paint them."

By this remark of Goethe's, much that was analogous was revived within me, and was presented in all its liveliness to my mind. Thus, he had said to me, not long before, that knowledge of the world is inborn with the genuine poet, and that he needs not much experience or varied observation to represent it adequately. "I wrote *Goetz von Berlichingen*," said he, "at two-and-twenty, and was astonished ten years later at the truth of my delineation. I had not experienced nor seen anything of the kind, and therefore I must have acquired the knowledge of various human conditions by way of anticipation.

"Generally, I only took pleasure in painting my inward world before I became acquainted with the outer one. But when I found, in actual life, that the world was really just what I had fancied, it vexed me, and I no more felt delight in representing it. Indeed, I may say that if I had waited till I knew the world before I represented it, my representation would have had the appearance of persiflage.

"There is in every character," said he, another time, "a certain necessity, a sequence, which, together with this or that leading feature, causes secondary features. Observation teaches this sufficiently; but with some persons this knowledge may be innate. Whether with me experience and innate faculty are united, I will not inquire; but this I know, if I have talked with any man a quarter of an hour, I will let him talk two hours."

Goethe had likewise said of Lord Byron, that the world to him was transparent and that he could paint by way of anticipation. I expressed some doubts whether Byron would succeed in painting, for instance, a subordinate animal nature; for his individuality seemed too powerful for him to give himself up to such a subject. Goethe admitted this, and replied that the anticipation only went so far as the objects were analogous to the talent; and we agreed that, in proportion as the anticipation is confined or extended, the representing talent is of greater or smaller compass.

"If your excellency," said I, "maintains that the world is inborn with the poet, you of course mean only the interior world, not the empirical world of appearances and conventions; if the poet is to give a representation of this also, an investigation into the actual will surely be requisite."

"Certainly," replied Goethe; "the region of love, hate, hope, despair, or by whatever other names you may call the moods and passions of the soul, is innate with the poet, and he succeeds in representing it. But it is not born with him to know by instinct how courts are held, or how a parliament or a coronation is managed; and, if he will not offend against truth while treating such subjects, he must have recourse to experience or tradition. Thus, in *Faust*, I could by anticipation know how to describe my hero's gloomy weariness of life, and the emotions of love in the heart of Gretchen; but the lines,

Wie traurig steigt die unvollkommne Scheibe
Des späten Monds mit feuchter Glut heran!

How gloomily does the imperfect disk
Of the late moon with humid glow arise!

required some observation of nature."

"Yet," said I, "every line of *Faust* bears marks, not to be mistaken, of a careful study of life and the world; nor is it for a moment doubted that the whole is only the result of the amplest experience."

"Perhaps so," replied Goethe; "yet, had I not the world already in my soul through anticipation, I should have remained blind with seeing eyes, and all experience and observation would have been unproductive labour. The light is there, and the colours surround us; but, if we had no light and no colours in our own eyes, we should not perceive the outward phenomena."

Saturday, February 28, 1824.

"There are," said Goethe, "excellent men, who are unable to do anything impromptu, or superficially, but whose nature demands that they should quietly and deeply penetrate into every subject they may take in hand. Such minds often make us impatient, for we seldom get from them what we want at the moment; but in this way alone the noblest tasks are accomplished."

I turned the conversation to Ramberg. "He," said Goethe, "is an artist of quite a different stamp, of a most genial talent, and indeed unequalled in his power of impromptu. At Dresden, he once asked me to give him a subject. I gave him Agamemnon, at the moment when, on his return home from Troy, he is descending from his chariot, and is seized with a gloomy feeling, on touching the threshold of his house. You will agree that this is a subject of a most difficult kind, and, with another artist, would have demanded the most mature deliberation. But the words had scarcely passed my lips, before Ramberg began to draw, and I was struck with admiration to see how correctly he at once apprehended his subject. I cannot deny that I should like to possess some drawings by Ramberg."

We talked then of other artists, who set to work in a superficial way, and thus degenerated into mannerism.

"Mannerism," said Goethe, "is always longing to have done, and has no true enjoyment in work. A really great talent, on the other hand, finds its greatest happiness in execution. Roos is unwearied in drawing the hair and wool of his goats and sheep; and you see by his infinite details that he enjoyed the purest felicity in doing his work, and had no wish to bring it to an end.

"Inferior talents do not enjoy art for its own sake; while at work they have nothing before their eyes but the profit they hope to make when they have done. With such worldly views and tendencies, nothing great was ever yet produced."

Sunday, February 29, 1824.

At twelve o'clock, I went to Goethe, who had invited me to take a drive before dinner. I found him at breakfast when I entered, and, taking my seat opposite him, turned the conversation upon those productions which occupy us both on account of the new edition of his works. I counselled him to insert both his *Gods, Heroes, and Wieland,* and his *Letters of a Pastor,* in this new edition.

"I cannot," said Goethe, "from my present point of view, judge of those youthful productions. You younger people may. Yet I will not find fault with those beginnings; I was, indeed, then in the dark, and struggled on, unconscious of what I was seeking so earnestly; but I had a feeling of the right, a divining-rod, that showed me where gold was to be found."

The horses had, in the meanwhile, been put to, and we rode towards Jena. Goethe mentioned the last French newspapers. "The constitution of France," said he, "belonging to a people who have within themselves so many elements of corruption, rests upon a basis very different from that of England. Everything may be done in France by bribery; indeed the whole French Revolution was directed by such means."

He then spoke of the death of Eugene Napoleon (Duke of Leuchtenberg), the news of which had arrived that morning. "He was one of those great characters," said Goethe, "which are becoming more and more rare; and the world is once more one important man the poorer. I knew him; only last summer I was with him at Marienbad. He was a handsome man, about forty-two; though he looked older, which was not to be wondered at when we call to mind all he went through, and how, through all his life, one campaign and one great deed pressed on another. At Marienbad he conversed with me much on the union of the Rhine with the Danube, by means of a canal—a gigantic enterprise, when you consider the obstacles offered by the locality. But to a man who has served under Napoleon, and with him shaken the world, nothing appears impossible. Charlemagne had the same plan, and even began the work, but it soon came to a standstill. The sand would not hold, the banks were always falling in on both sides."

Monday, March 22, 1824.

To-day, before dinner, I went with Goethe into his garden.

The situation of this garden, on the other side of the Ilm, near the park, and on the western declivity of a hill, is most inviting. It is protected from the north and east winds, but open to the cheering influences of the south and west; which makes it a most delightful abode, especially in spring and autumn.

You are so near the town, which lies north-west, that you can be there in a few minutes; and yet you cannot see the top of a building, or even a spire; the tall and thickly-planted trees of the park shut out every other object on that side. Under the name of the "Star," they go to the left, towards the north, close to the carriage-way, which leads immediately from the garden.

Towards the west and south-west, there is a free view over a spacious meadow, through which, a bow-shot away, the Ilm winds silently. On the opposite side of the river, the bank rises like a hill; on the summit and sides of which spreads the broad park, with the mixed foliage of alders, ash-trees, poplars, and birches, bounding the view at an agreeable distance on south and west.

This view of the park over the meadow gives a sense, especially in summer, of being near a wood that extends for leagues. Every moment it seems possible that there will be deer bounding out upon the meadows. It is as the peace of the deepest natural solitude; the silence often uninterrupted, except by the notes of the blackbird, or the frequently-suspended song of the wood-thrush.

Out of this dream of profound solitude, we are, however, awakened by the striking of the tower-clock, the screaming of the peacocks from the park, or the drums and horns of the military in the barracks. And this is not unpleasant; for such tones comfortably recall the neighbourhood of the friendly city, which had seemed many miles distant.

At certain seasons these meadows are the reverse of lonely. Sometimes country people are going to Weimar to market, or to work, and returning thence; sometimes loungers of all sorts are walking along the windings of the Ilm, especially in the direction towards Upper Weimar, which is on certain days much visited. The hay-making season also animates the scene very agreeably. In the background, flocks of sheep are grazing, and sometimes the stately Swiss cows of the neighbouring farm.

To-day, however, there was no trace of these summer phenomena. On the meadows, some streaks of green were scarcely visible; the trees of the park as yet could boast nothing but brown twigs and buds; yet the note of the finch, with the occasional song of the blackbird and thrush, announced the approach of spring. A very mild south-west wind was blowing. Small isolated thunder-clouds passed along the clear sky; high above might be observed the dispersing cirrus-streaks. The massive clouds of the lower region were likewise dispersing; from which Goethe inferred that the barometer must be rising.

Goethe then spoke much about the rising and falling of the barometer, which he called the affirmative and negative of water. He spoke of the inhaling and exhaling processes of the earth, according to eternal laws; of a possible deluge, if the "water-affirmative" continued. He said, besides, that, though each place has its proper atmosphere, there is great uniformity in the state of the barometer throughout: Europe Nature, he said, was incommensurable; and, with her great irregularities, it was often difficult to find her laws.

While he thus instructed me on such high subjects, we were walking up and down the broad gravel-walk of the garden. We came near the house,[1] which he bade the servant open, that he might show me the interior. Without, the whitewashed walls were covered with rose-bushes, on espaliers, to the roof. I went round the house, and saw on the branches of these rose-bushes, against the wall, a great number of birds' nests, there since the preceding summer, and, now that the bushes were bare of leaves, exposed to the eye. There were especially to be observed the nests of the linnet and of various kinds of hedge-sparrows, built high or low according to the habits of the birds.

Goethe then took me inside the house, which I had not seen since last summer. In the lower story I found only one habitable room, on the walls of which were hung some charts and engravings; besides a portrait of Goethe, as large as life, painted by Meyer shortly after the return of both friends from Italy. Goethe here appears in the prime of his powers and his manhood, very brown, and rather stout. The expression of the countenance is not very animated, and is very serious; that of a man on whose mind lies the weight of future deeds.

We ascended the stairs to the upper rooms. I found three, and one little cabinet; but all very small, and not very convenient. Goethe said that in former years he had passed a great deal of his time here with pleasure, and had worked very peacefully.

These rooms were rather cool, and we returned into the open air, which was mild. As we walked up and down the chief pathway in the noonday sun, our conversation turned on modern literature, Schelling, and some new plays by Count Platen.

We soon returned to the natural objects. The crown-imperials and lilies were already far advanced; the mallows on both sides of the park were already green.

The upper part of the garden, on the declivity of the hill, is covered with grass, and here and there a few fruit-trees. Paths run along the summit, and then return to the foot; which made me wish to ascend them and look about me. Goethe walked swiftly before me, and I was rejoiced to see how active he was.

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[1] The garden-house.

On the hedge above we found a pea-hen, which seemed to have come from the prince's park; and Goethe remarked that, in summer time, he was accustomed to allure the peacocks with their favourite food.

Descending on the winding path on the other side of the hill, I found a stone, surrounded by shrubs, on which was carved this line from the well-known poem:

Hier im stillen gedachte der Liebende seiner Geliebten;
Here in silence reflected the lover upon his beloved.

and I felt as if I were on classic ground.

Near this was a thicket of half-grown oaks, firs, birches, and beech-trees. Beneath the firs, I found the castings of a bird of prey. I showed these to Goethe, who said he had often seen such in this place. I concluded that these firs were an abode of owls, frequently seen in this place.

Passing round this thicket, we found ourselves once more on the broad path near the house. The oaks, firs, birches, and beeches, which we had just gone round, being mingled together, here form a semicircle, overarching like a grotto the inner space, in which we sat down on little chairs, placed about a round table. The sun was so strong that the shade even of these leafless trees was agreeable. "I know," said Goethe, "no better refuge, in the heats of summer, than this spot. I planted all the trees, forty years ago, with my own hand; I have had the pleasure of watching their growth, and have now for a long time enjoyed their refreshing shade. The foliage of these oaks and beeches is impervious to the most potent sun. In hot summer days, I like to sit here after dinner; and often over the meadows and the whole park such stillness reigns, that the ancients would say, 'Pan sleeps.'"

We now heard the town-clock striking two, and returned to the house.

Tuesday, March 30, 1824.

This evening I was with Goethe alone; we talked, and drank a bottle of wine. We spoke of the French drama, as contrasted with the German.

"It will be very difficult," said Goethe, "for the German public to come to a right judgment, as they do in Italy and France. We have a special obstacle, in the circumstance that on our stage a medley of all sorts of things is represented. On the same boards where we saw Hamlet yesterday, we see Staberl [1] to-day; and, if to-morrow we are delighted with *Zauberflöte*, the day after we shall be charmed with the oddities of the next lucky wight. Hence the public becomes confused, mingling together various species, which it never learns rightly to appreciate and to understand. Furthermore, everyone has his own demands and personal wishes, and returns to the spot where he finds them realized. On the tree where he has plucked figs to-day, he would pluck them again to-morrow, and would make a long face if sloes had grown in their stead during the night. If anyone is a friend to sloes, he goes to the thorns.

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[1] A Viennese buffoon.—J. O.

"Schiller had the happy thought of building a house for tragedy alone, and of giving a piece every week for the male sex exclusively. But this notion presupposed a large city, and could not be realized with our humble means."

We talked about the plays of Iffland and Kotzebue, which, in their way, Goethe highly commended. "From this very fault," said he, "that people do not perfectly distinguish between *kinds* in art, the pieces of these men are often unjustly censured. We may wait a long time before a couple of such popular talents come again."

I praised Iffland's *Hagestolz* (Old Bachelor), with which I had been highly pleased on the stage. "It is unquestionably Iffland's best piece," said Goethe; "it is the only one in which he goes from prose into the ideal."

He then told me of a piece he and Schiller had made as a continuation to the *Hagestolz*; that is to say, in conversation, without writing it down. Goethe told me the progress of the action scene by scene; very pleasant and cheerful.

Goethe then spoke of some new plays by Platen. "In these pieces," said he, "we may see the influence of Calderon. They are very clever, and, in a certain sense, complete; but they want specific gravity, a certain weight of import. They are not of a kind to excite in the mind of the reader a deep and abiding interest; the strings of the soul are touched but lightly and transiently. They are like cork, which swims on the water, making no impression.

"The German requires a certain earnestness, a certain grandeur of thought, and a certain fulness of sentiment. It is on this account that Schiller is so highly esteemed by all. I do not in the least doubt the abilities of Platen; but those, probably from mistaken views of art, are not manifested here. He shows distinguished culture, intellect, pungent wit, and artistical completeness; but these, especially in Germany, are not enough.

"Generally, the personal character of the writer influences the public rather than his talents as an artist. Napoleon said of Corneille, '*S'il vivait, je le ferais prince*'; yet he never read him. Racine he read, but did not say this of him. La Fontaine, too, is looked upon with a high degree of esteem by the French —on account, not of his poetic merits, but of the greatness of character manifested in his writings."

We then talked of the *Elective Affinities* (Wahlverwandtschaften); and Goethe told me of a travelling Englishman, who meant to be separated from his wife when he returned to England. He laughed at such folly, and gave me several examples of persons who had been separated, and afterwards could not let each other alone.

"The late Reinhard of Dresden," said he, "often wondered that I had such severe principles with respect to marriage, while I was so tolerant in everything else."

This expression of Goethe's was remarkable to me, because it clearly showed what he really intended by that often misunderstood work (*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*).

We then talked about Tieck, and his personal relation to Goethe.

"I entertain the greatest kindness for Tieck," said Goethe; "and I think that, on the whole, he is well disposed towards me. Still, there is something not as it ought to be in his relation to me. This is neither my fault nor his, but proceeds from causes altogether foreign.

"When the Schlegels began to make themselves important, I was too strong for them; and, to balance me, they were forced to look about for some man of talent whom they might set up in opposition. They found Tieck; and so that, when placed in contrast to me, he might appear sufficiently important in the eyes of the public, they were forced to make more of him than he really was. This injured our mutual relation; for Tieck, without being properly conscious of it himself, was thus placed in a false position with respect to me.

"Tieck is a talent of great importance, and nobody can be more sensible than myself of his extraordinary merits; only when they raise him above himself, and place him on a level with me, they are in error. I can speak this out plainly; it matters nothing to me, for I did not make myself. I might just as well compare myself to Shakespeare, who likewise did not make himself, and who is nevertheless a being of a higher order, to whom I must look up with reverence."

Goethe was this evening full of energy and gaiety. He brought some manuscript poems, which he read aloud. Not only did the original force and freshness of the poems excite me to a high degree; but also, by his manner of reading them, he showed himself to me in a phase hitherto unknown but highly important. What variety and force in his voice! What life and expression in the noble countenance, so full of wrinkles! And what eyes!

Wednesday, April 14, 1824.

I went out walking with Goethe about one. We discussed the styles of various writers.

"On the whole," said Goethe, "philosophical speculation is an injury to the Germans, as it tends to make their style vague, difficult, and obscure. The stronger their attachment to certain philosophical schools, the worse they write. Those Germans who, as men of business and actual life, confine themselves to the practical, write the best. Schiller's style is most noble and impressive whenever he leaves off philosophizing; as I observe every day in his highly interesting letters, with which I am now busy.

"There are likewise, among the German women, genial beings who write a really excellent style, and indeed in that respect surpass many of our celebrated male writers.

"The English almost always write well; being born orators and practical men, with a tendency to the real.

"The French, in their style, remain true to their general character. They are of a social nature, and therefore never forget the public whom they address; they strive to be clear, that they may convince their reader—agreeable, that they may please him.

"Altogether, the style of a writer is a faithful representative of his mind; therefore, if any man wish to write a clear style, let him be first clear in his thoughts; and if any would write in a noble style, let him first possess a noble soul."

Goethe then spoke of his antagonists as a race that would never become extinct. "Their number," said he, "is legion; yet they may be in some degree classified. First, there are my antagonists from stupidity—those who do not understand me, and find fault with me without knowing me. This large company has wearied me much in the course of my life; yet shall they be forgiven, for they knew not what they did.

"The second large class is composed of those who envy me. These grudge me the fortune and the dignified station I have attained through my talents. They pluck at my fame, and would like to destroy me. If I were poor and miserable, they would assail me no more.

"There are many who have been my adversaries, because they themselves have failed. In this class are men of fine talent, but they cannot forgive me for casting them into the shade.

"Fourthly, there are my antagonists from *reasons*. For, as I am a human being, and as such have human faults and weaknesses, my writings cannot be free from them. Yet, as I was constantly bent on my own improvement, and always striving to ennoble myself, I was in a state of constant progress, and it often happened that they blamed me for faults I had long since left behind. These good folks have injured me least of any, as they shot at me when I was already miles distant. Generally, when a work was finished, it became uninteresting to me; I thought of it no more, but busied myself with some new plan.

"Another large class comprises those who are adversaries because they differ from me in their views and modes of thought. It is said of the leaves on a tree, that you will scarcely find two perfectly alike; and thus, among a thousand men, you will scarce find two who harmonize entirely in their views and ways of thinking. This being allowed, I ought less to wonder at having so many opponents, than at having so many friends and adherents. My tendencies were opposed to those of my time, which were wholly subjective; while, in my objective efforts, I stood alone to my own disadvantage.

"Schiller had, in this respect, great advantage over me. Hence, a certain well-meaning general once gave me plainly to understand, that I ought to write like Schiller. I replied by analysing Schiller's merits, for I knew them better than he. I went quietly on in my own way; not troubling myself further about success, and taking as little notice as possible of my opponents."

We returned, and had a very pleasant time at dinner. Frau von Goethe talked much of Berlin, where she had lately been. She spoke with especial warmth of the Duchess of Cumberland, who had shown her much kindness. Goethe, with particular interest, remembered this princess, who when very young had passed some time with his mother.

In the evening, I had a musical treat of a high order at

Goethe's house; where some fine singers, under the superintendence of Eberwein, performed part of Händel's *Messiah*. The Countess Caroline von Egloffstein, Fräulein von Froriep, with Frau von Pogwisch and Frau von Goethe, joined the female singers, and thus kindly gratified a wish which Goethe had entertained long since.

Goethe, sitting at some distance, wholly absorbed in hearing, passed a happy evening, full of admiration at this noble work.

Monday, April 19, 1824.

The greatest philologist of our time, Friedrich August Wolf, from Berlin, is here, on his way towards the south of France. Goethe gave, to-day, on his account, a dinner to his Weimar friends; at which General Superintendent Röhr, Chancellor von Müller, Oberbau-Director Coudray, Professor Riemer, Hofrath Rehbein, and myself, were present. The conversation was very lively. Wolf was full of witty sallies, Goethe being his opponent. "I cannot," said Goethe to me afterwards, "get on with Wolf at all, without assuming the character of Mephistopheles. Nothing else brings out his hidden treasures."

The *bon mots* at table were too evanescent, and too much the result of the moment, to bear repetition. Wolf was very great in witty turns and repartees, but nevertheless it seemed to me that Goethe always maintained a certain superiority over him.

The hours at table flew by as if with wings, and six o'clock came before we were aware. I went with young Goethe to the theatre, where *Zauberflöte* was played. Afterwards I saw Wolf in the box, with the Grand Duke Carl August.

Wolf remained in Weimar till the 25th, when he set out for the south of France. The state of his health was such that Goethe did not conceal the greatest anxiety about him.

Sunday, May 2, 1824.

Goethe reproved me for not having visited a certain family of distinction. "You might," said he, "have passed there, during the winter, many delightful evenings, and have made the acquaintance of many interesting strangers; all which you have lost from God knows what caprice."

"With my excitable temperament," I replied, "and with my disposition to a broad sympathy with others, nothing can be more burdensome and hurtful to me than an overabundance of new impressions. I am neither by education nor by habit fitted for general society. My situation in earlier days was such that I feel as if I had never lived till I came near you. All is new to me. Every evening at the theatre, every conversation with you, makes an era in my existence. Things perfectly indifferent to persons of different education and habits, make the deepest impression on me; and, as the desire of instructing myself is great, my mind seizes on everything with energy, and draws from it as much nourishment as possible. In this state of mind, I had quite enough in the course of this winter, from the theatre and my connection with you; and I should not have been able to give myself up to other connections and engagements without disturbing my mind."

"You are an odd fellow," said Goethe, laughing. "Well, do as you please; I will let you have your way."

"And then," continued I, "I usually carry into society my likes and dislikes, and a certain need of loving and being beloved; I seek a nature which may harmonize with my own; I wish to give myself up to this, and to have nothing to do with the others."

"This natural tendency of yours," replied Goethe, "is indeed not of a social kind; and what would be the use of culture if we did not try to control our natural tendencies? It is a great folly to hope that other men will harmonize with us; I have never hoped this. I have always regarded each man as an independent individual, whom I endeavoured to understand with all his peculiarities, but from whom I desired no further sympathy. In this way have I been enabled to converse with every man, and thus alone is produced the knowledge of various characters and the dexterity necessary for the conduct of life. For it is in conflict with natures opposed to his own that a man must collect his strength to fight his way through; and thus all our different sides are brought out and developed, so that we soon feel ourselves a match for every foe. You should do the same; you have more capacity for it than you imagine; indeed, you must at all events plunge into the great world, whether you like it or not."

I took due heed of these good and kind words.

Towards evening, Goethe invited me to take a drive. Our road lay over the hills through Upper Weimar, by which we had a view of the park towards the west. The trees were in blossom, the birches already in full leaf; and the meadows were one green carpet, over which the setting sun cast a glow. We sought out picturesque groups, and could not look enough. We remarked that trees full of white blossoms should not be painted, because they make no picture, just as birches with their foliage are unfit for the foreground of a picture, because the delicate leaf does not sufficiently balance the white trunk; there are no large masses for strong effects of light and shade. "Ruysdael," said Goethe, "never introduced the birch with its foliage into his foregrounds, but only birch trunks broken off, without any leaves. Such a trunk is perfectly suited to a foreground, as its bright form comes out with most powerful effect."

After some slight discussion of other topics, we came upon the mistake of those artists who make religion art, whereas for them art should be religion. "Religion," said Goethe, "stands in the same relation to art as any other of the higher interests in life. It is merely to be looked upon as a material, with claims similar to those of any other vital material. Faith and want of faith are not the organs with which a work of art is to be apprehended: powers and capacities of a totally different character are required. Art must address itself to those organs with which we apprehend it; otherwise it misses its effect. A religious material may be a good subject for art, but only in so far as it possesses general human interest. The Virgin with the Child is on this account an excellent subject; one that may be treated a hundred times, and always seen with pleasure."

Meanwhile, we had gone round the thicket (the Webicht), and had turned by Tiefurt into the Weimar road, where we had a view of the setting sun. Goethe was for a while lost in thought; he then said to me, in the words of one of the ancients:

"*Untergehend sogar ist's immer dieselbige Sonne.*"
"Still it continues the self-same sun, e'en while it is sinking."

"At seventy-five," continued he, with much cheerfulness, "one must of course think sometimes of death. But this thought never gives me uneasiness; for I am convinced that our spirit is indestructible, and that its activity continues from eternity to eternity. It is like the sun, which seems to set only to our earthly eyes, but which in reality never sets but shines on unceasingly."

The sun had meanwhile sunk behind the Ettersberg; we felt in the wood the chill of the evening, and drove all the quicker to Weimar, and to Goethe's house. Goethe urged me to go in with him for a while, and I did so. He talked a great deal about his theory of colours, and of his obstinate opponents; remarking that he was sure that he had done something in this science.

"To make an epoch in the world," said he, "two conditions are notoriously essential—a good head, and a great inheritance. Napoleon inherited the French Revolution; Frederick the Great, the Silesian War; Luther, the darkness of the Popes; and I, the errors of the Newtonian theory. The present generation has no conception of what I have accomplished in this matter, but posterity will grant that I have by no means come into a bad inheritance!"

Goethe had sent me this morning a roll of papers relative to the theatre, among which I had found the rules and studies he had made with Wolff and Grüner to qualify them as good actors. I proposed to put them together, and make from them a sort of theatrical catechism. Goethe consented, and we discussed the matter. This gave us occasion to speak of some distinguished actors who had been formed in his school; and I took the opportunity to ask some questions about Frau von Heigendorf. "I may," said Goethe, "have influenced her, but properly speaking she is not my pupil. She was, as it were, born on the boards, and was as decided, ready, and adroit in anything as a duck in the water. She needed not my instruction; but did what was right instinctively, and perhaps without knowing it."

We then talked of the many years he had superintended the theatre, and the time thus lost to literary production. "Yes," said he, "I may have missed writing many a good thing; but, when I reflect, I am not sorry. I have always regarded all I have done solely as symbolical; and, in fact, it has been tolerably indifferent to me whether I have made pots or dishes."

(Sup.) Wednesday, May 5, 1824.

The papers containing the studies Goethe prosecuted with the actors Wolff and Grüner have occupied me the last few days; and I have succeeded in bringing them into a sort of form. I spoke with Goethe about this work to-day, and we went through the topics in detail. The remarks concerning pronunciation, and the laying aside of provincialisms, appeared particularly important.

"I have, in my long practice," said Goethe, "become acquainted with beginners from all parts of Germany. The pronunciation of the North German leaves little to be desired:

it is pure, and may in many respects be looked upon as a model. On the contrary, I have often had a great deal of trouble with native Suabians, Austrians, and Saxons. The natives of our beloved town, Weimar, have also given me a great deal to do. Among these have arisen the most ridiculous mistakes; because in schools here they are not forced to distinguish, by a marked pronunciation, *b* from *p*, and *d* from *t*. One would scarcely believe that *b*, *p*, *d*, and *t*, are generally considered to be *four* different letters; for they only speak of a hard and a soft *b*, and of a hard and a soft *d*, and thus seem tacitly to intimate that *p* and *t* do not exist. With such people, *Pein* (pain) sounds like *Bein* (leg), *Pas* (pass) like *Bass* (bass), and *Teckel*[1] like *Deckel* (cover)."

"An actor of this town," added I, "who did not properly distinguish *t* from *d*, lately was playing a lover, who had been guilty of a little infidelity; whereupon the angry young lady showered violent reproaches upon him. Growing impatient, he had to exclaim, '*O ende!*' (O cease!); but being unable to distinguish the *t* from the *d*, he exclaimed, '*O ente!*' (O duck!),[2] which excited laughter."

"The circumstance is very quaint," returned Goethe, "and will do well to mention in our *Theatrical Catechism*."

"Lately, a young singer, likewise of this town," continued I, "who could not make the distinction between the *t* and the *d*, had to say, '*Ich will dich den Eingeweihten übergeben*' (I will give you up to the initiated); but as she pronounced the *t* as *d*, it sounded as if she said, '*Ich will dich den Eingeweiden übergeben*' (I will give you up to the bowels). Again, an actor of this town who played the part of a servant, had to say to a stranger, '*Mein Herr ist nicht zu Haus, er sitzt im Rathe*' (my master is not at home, he sits in council); but as he could not distinguish the *t* from the *d*, it sounded as if he said, '*Mein Herr ist nicht zu Haus, er sitzt im Rade*' (my master is not at home, he sits in the wheel)."

"These incidents," said Goethe, "are not bad, and we will notice them. Thus, if anyone who does not distinguish the *p* from the *b*, has to call out, '*Packe ihn an!*' (seize him), but, instead of this, exclaims, '*Backe ihn an!*' (stick him on), it is very laughable.

"In a similar manner," said Goethe, "the *ü* is frequently pronounced like *i*, which has been the cause of not a few scandalous mistakes. I have frequently heard said, instead of *Küstenbewohner* (inhabitant of the coast), *Kistenbewohner* (inhabitant of the box); instead of *Thürstück* (a painting over a door), *Thierstück* (animal-picture); instead of *Gründlich* (well-grounded), *Grindlich* (scurfy); instead of *Trübe* (gloomy), *Triebe* (impulses); and instead of *Ihr müsst* (you must), *Ihr misst* (you miss);—never without a hearty laugh."

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[1] A provincial word for a terrier.

[2] This blunder had not even the appositeness that "duck" would have had in English; for the secondary meaning of *Ente* is not "darling" but "canard."

"I lately noticed at the theatre," said I, "a very ludicrous case of the kind, in which a lady, in a critical situation, has to follow a man, whom she had never seen before. She had to say, '*Ich kenne Dich zwar nicht, aber ich setze mein ganzes Vertrauen in den Edelmuth Deiner Züge*' (I do not know you, but I place entire confidence in the nobility of your countenance); but as she pronounced the *ü* like *i*, she said, '*Ich kenne Dich zwar nicht, aber ich setze mein ganzes Vertrauen in den Edelmuth Deiner Ziege*' (I do not know you, but I place entire confidence in the nobility of your goat)."

"Not bad," returned Goethe, "we will notice that also. *G* and *k* are here frequently confounded; possibly from uncertainty whether the letter should be hard or soft, a result of the doctrine so much in vogue here. You have probably often heard, or will hear, in our theatre, *Kartenhaus* (card-house) instead of *Gartenhaus* (garden-house), *Kasse* (chest) instead of *Gasse* (lane), *Klauben* (to pick out) instead of *Glauben* (to believe), *bekränzen* (to enwreathe) instead of *begrenzen* (to bound), and *Kunst* (art) instead of *Gunst* (favour)."

"I have already heard something similar," returned I. "An actor of this town had to say, '*Dein Gram geht mir zu Herzen*' (Thy grief touches my heart). But he said very distinctly, '*Dein Kram geht mir zu Herzen*' (Thy goods[1] touch my heart)."

"Besides," answered Goethe, "we hear this substitution of *g* for *k*, not merely amongst actors, but even amongst theologians. I once experienced an incident of this sort. When I, some five years ago, stayed at Jena, and lodged at the Fir Tree, a theological student one morning presented himself. After he had conversed with me very agreeably, he made, as he was just going, a request of a most peculiar kind. He begged me *to allow him to preach in my stead on the next Sunday*. I saw which way the wind blew, and that the hopeful youth was one of those who confound *g* with *k*. I therefore answered that I could not personally assist; but that he would be sure to attain his object if he would apply to Archdeacon Koethe."

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[1] Or lumber.—J. O.

Thursday, May 6, 1824.

When I came to Weimar last summer, it was not, as I have said, my intention to remain here; I only intended to make Goethe's personal acquaintance, and then to visit the Rhine, where I intended to live some time. However, I had been detained in Weimar by Goethe's remarkable kindness, and my relation to him had become more and more practical, as he drew me into his own interest and gave me work to do, preparatory to a complete edition of his works. Thus, in the course of last winter, I collected several divisions of "tame Xenia" (*zahme Xenien*) from the most confused bundles of paper, arranged a volume of new poems, and the *Theatrical Catechism*, and also the outlines of a treatise on Dilettantism in the different arts. I had, however, never forgotten my design of seeing the Rhine; and Goethe himself, that I might not carry within me the sting of an unsatisfied desire, advised me to devote some months of this summer to that region.

It was, however, decidedly his wish that I should return to Weimar. He observed that it was not good to break ties scarcely formed, and that everything in life to be of value must have a sequence; and he intimated that he had selected Riemer and me, not only to aid him in preparing a new and complete edition of his works, but also to take the whole charge of it in case he should be suddenly called away, as might naturally happen at his advanced age.

He showed me this morning immense packages of letters, laid out in what is called the Chamber of Busts (*Büsten-Zimmer*). "These," said he, "are all letters which I have received since 1780, from the most distinguished men of our country. There lies hoarded in these a rich treasure of thoughts, which it shall some time be your office to impart to the public. I am now having a chest made, in which these letters will be put, with the rest of my literary remains. I wish you, before you set out on your journey, to put them all in order, that I may feel easy about them, and have a care the less."

He then told me that he intended to visit Marienbad this summer, but not till the end of July. He expressed a wish that I should be back before his departure.

A few weeks afterwards, I visited my friends in Hanover then stopped during the months of June and July on the Rhine; where, especially at Frankfort, Heidelberg, and Bonn, I made many valuable acquaintances among Goethe's friends.[1]

(Sup.) Tuesday, May 18, 1824.

This evening at Goethe's, in company with Riemer.

Goethe talked about an English poem on geology. He made an impromptu translation of it, with so much spirit, imagination, and good humour, that every object stood before us, with as much life as if it were his own invention at the moment. The hero of the poem, King *Coal*, was seen, in his brilliant hall of audience, seated upon his throne; his consort, *Pyrites*, by his side, waiting for the nobles of the kingdom. Entering according to their rank, they appeared one by one to the king, and were introduced as Duke *Granite*, Marquis *Slate*, Countess *Porphyry*, and so on with the rest, who were all characterized by some excellent epithet and joke. Then followed Sir Lorenzo *Chalk*, a man of great possessions, and well received at court. He excuses his mother, the Lady *Marble*, on the ground that her residence is rather distant. She is a very polished and accomplished lady, and a cause of her non-appearance at court is that she is involved in an intrigue with *Canova*, who likes to flirt with her. *Tufa*, whose hair is decked with lizards and fishes, appears rather intoxicated. Hans *Marl* and Jacob *Clay* do not appear till the end; the last is a particular favourite of the queen, because he has promised her a collection of shells. Thus the whole went on for a long time in the most cheerful tone; but the details were too minute for me to note the further progress of the story.

"Such a poem," said Goethe, "is calculated to amuse people of the world, while at the same time it diffuses a quantity of useful information. A taste for science is thus excited amongst the higher circles; and nobody knows how much good may ultimately result from such an entertaining half-joke. Many a clever person may be induced to make observations himself, within his own immediate sphere. And such individual observations, drawn from the natural objects with which we are in contact, are often the more valuable the less the observer professionally belongs to the particular department of science."

"You appear, then, to intimate," returned I, "that the more one knows, the worse one observes."

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[1] This short statement, though attached to the conversation of 6th May in the first volume, will be read more properly after 26th May [p. 68], which is taken from the supplemental volume.—J. O.

"Certainly," said Goethe, "when the knowledge that is handed down is combined with errors. As soon as anybody belongs to a certain narrow creed in science, every unprejudiced and true perception is gone. The decided Vulcanist always sees through the spectacles of a Vulcanist; and every Neptunist, and every professor of the newest elevation-theory, through his own. The contemplation of the world, with all these theorists, has lost its innocence, the objects no longer appear in their natural purity. If these learned men, then, give an account of their observations, we obtain, notwithstanding their love of truth as individuals, no actual truth with reference to the objects; we always get the taste of a strong subjective mixture.

"I am, however, far from maintaining that an unprejudiced correct knowledge is a drawback to observation. I am much more inclined to support the old truth, that we have only eyes and ears for what we know. The musician by profession hears, in an orchestral performance, every instrument and every single tone; whilst one unacquainted with the art is wrapped up in the massive effect of the whole. A man merely bent upon enjoyment sees in a green or flowery meadow only a pleasant plain, whilst the eye of a botanist discovers an endless detail of the most varied plants and grasses.

"All have their measure and goal; and, as it has been said in my *Goetz von Berlichingen*, that the son, from pure learning, does not know his own father, so in science do we find people who can neither see nor hear, through sheer learning and hypothesis. Such people look at once within; they are so occupied by what is revolving in themselves, that they are like a man in a passion, who passes his dearest friends in the street without seeing them. The observation of nature requires a certain purity of mind that cannot be disturbed or preoccupied by anything. The beetle on the flower does not escape the child; he has devoted all his senses to a single simple interest; and it never strikes him that at the same moment something remarkable may be going on in the formation of the clouds to distract his glances in that direction."

"Then," returned I, "children and the child-like would be good hod-men in science."

"Would to God!" exclaimed Goethe, "we were all nothing more than good hod-men. It is just because we will be more, and carry about with us a great apparatus of philosophy and hypothesis, that we spoil all."

Then followed a pause, which Riemer broke by mentioning

Lord Byron and his death. Goethe thereupon gave a brilliant elucidation of his writings, and was full of the highest praise and the purest acknowledgment.

"However," continued he, "although Byron has died so young, literature has not suffered an essential loss. Byron could, in a certain sense, go no farther. He had reached the summit of his creative power, and whatever he might have done in the future, he would have been unable to extend the boundaries of his talent. In the incomprehensible poem, his *Vision of Judgment*,[1] he has done the utmost of which he was capable."

The discourse then turned upon the Italian poet, Torquato Tasso, and his resemblance to Lord Byron; when Goethe could not conceal the superiority of the Englishman, in spirit, grasp of the world, and productive power. "We cannot," continued he, "compare these poets with each other, without annihilating one by the other. Byron is the burning thorn-bush which reduces the holy cedar of Lebanon to ashes. The great epic poem of the Italian has maintained its fame for centuries; yet, with a single line of *Don Juan*, the whole of *Jerusalem Delivered* could be poisoned."

(Sup.) Wednesday, May 26, 1824,

To-day I took leave of Goethe, to visit my friends in Hanover, and thence to proceed to the Rhine, according to plan. Goethe was very affectionate, and pressed me in his arms. "If at Hanover you should meet, at Rehberg's, Charlotte Kestner, the old friend of my youth, remember me to her kindly. In Frankfort, I commend you to my friends Willemers, the Count Reinhardt, and the Schlossers. Then, in both Heidelberg and Bonn, you will find friends devoted to me, to whom you will be welcome. I did intend again to spend some time at Marienbad this summer; but I shall not go until after your return."

The parting with Goethe was very trying to me; though I went away firmly convinced I should see him again, safe and sound, at the end of two months.

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[1] "Seines jüngsten Gerichts" (his Doomsday Tribunal). An interesting example of the necessity for cultivating a British sense of humour before criticizing English literature. Goethe's humour was purely German. Byron's *Vision of Judgment* is not beyond the comprehension of the simplest English reader who has a rough notion of the reign of George III. It was written to ridicule a pompous poem of the same name by the poet-laureate Southey.

Nevertheless, I felt very happy next day when the carriage conveyed me towards my beloved home in Hanover, to which my heartiest longings are constantly directed.

Tuesday, August 10, 1824.

About a week ago, I returned from my tour on the Rhine. Goethe expressed much joy at my arrival; and I was not less pleased to be with him again. He had a great deal to say to me; so that for the first few days I stirred but little from his side. His design of going to Marienbad is abandoned; he does not intend to travel this summer. "Now you are again here," he said, "I may have a very pleasant August."

A few days ago, he put into my hands the beginning of a continuation of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, written on quarto leaves, and scarcely a finger's breadth thick. Part is complete, but the greater part consists of mere indications. However, it is already divided into five books; and the leaves containing the sketch are so arranged that the general import can be seen.

The portion finished appears to me so excellent, and the import of the sketched portion so valuable, that I regret exceedingly to see a work that promises so much instruction and enjoyment come to a standstill, and I shall urge Goethe to continue and complete it.

The whole has much of the character of a novel. A graceful, tender, passionate love-affair, cheerful in its origin, idyllic in its progress, tragic at the end through a tacit but mutual renunciation, runs through four books, and combines them in an organized whole. The charm of Lili's character, described in detail, is of a sort to captivate every reader; just as it did the lover who could only save himself by repeated flight.

The epoch of life set forth is highly romantic—at least, as developed in the principal character. But its importance is, that, as preceding the position at Weimar, it is decisive for the whole life. If any section of Goethe's life raises a wish for detailed description, it is this.

To excite in Goethe a new ardour for this work, which has been interrupted and has lain untouched for years, I have not only talked with him on the subject, but also sent him the following notes, that he may see at once what is finished and what has still to be worked out and arranged.[1]

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[1] The last five books of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* were afterwards published in Goethe's posthumous works, but Eckermann's arrangement was not adopted.—J. O.

FIRST BOOK

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I suggest that the relation to Lili, which runs through the four following books, should begin in this first book, and continue as far as the excursion to Offenbach. Thus, too, this book would gain in compass and importance, and too great an increase of the second would be prevented.

SECOND BOOK

The idyllic life at Offenbach would then open this second book, and would go through with the happy love-affair; till it begins to assume a doubtful, earnest, and even tragical character.

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THIRD BOOK

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Whether the plan of *Faust* is to be communicated or kept back is a doubtful point, which cannot be resolved until we examine the fragments now ready, and make up our minds whether the hope of a continuation of *Faust* is to be given up or not.

FOURTH BOOK

The third book would terminate with the attempt at a separation from Lili. This fourth book, therefore, very aptly begins with the arrival of the Stolbergs and of Haugwitz, by which the journey into Switzerland and the first flight from Lili are brought about.

* * * * * *

FIFTH BOOK

This beautiful book is likewise nearly finished—at least as to the latter part, to the conclusion, which touches on the unfathomable nature of fate; only a little is wanting for the introduction, of which there is already a clear sketch. The working-out is, however, the more necessary and desirable, as the first mention is made of the Weimar affairs, and thus our interest for them is excited.

Monday, August 16, 1824.

My conversations with Goethe have lately been very abundant in matter, but I have been so much engaged with other things that I have been unable to write down anything of importance.

Only the following detached sentences are found noted down in my diary; the connection between them, and the occasion that gave rise to them, I have forgotten.

Men are swimming pots, which knock against each other.

In the morning we are shrewdest, but also most anxious; for even anxiety is a species of shrewdness, though only a passive one. Stupidity is without anxiety.

We must not take the faults of our youth into our old age; for old age brings with it its own defects.

Court-life is like music, in which everybody must keep time.

Courtiers would die of ennui, if they could not fill up their time with ceremonies.

It is not right to counsel a prince to give way, even in the most trivial matter.

He who would train actors must have infinite patience.

Tuesday, November 9, 1824.

I passed this evening with Goethe. We talked of Klopstock and Herder.

"Without those powerful precursors," said Goethe, "our literature could not have become what it now is. When they appeared, they were before their age, and were obliged to drag it after them; but now the age has far outrun them, and they who were once so necessary and important have now ceased to be *means to an end*. A young man who would take Klopstock and Herder for his teachers nowadays would be far behindhand."

We talked over Klopstock's *Messiah* and his Odes, touching on their merits and their defects. We agreed that he had no faculty for observing and apprehending the visible world, or for drawing characters; and that he therefore wanted the qualities most essential to the epic and dramatic poet—or, perhaps it might be said, to the poet generally.

"An ode occurs to me," said Goethe, "where he makes the German Muse run a race with the British; and indeed, when one thinks what a picture it is, where the two girls run one against the other, throwing about their legs, and kicking up the dust, one must assume that the good Klopstock had not really before his eyes pictures of what he wrote, else he could not have made such mistakes."

I asked how he had felt towards Klopstock in his youth.

"I venerated him," said Goethe; "I looked upon him as an uncle. I revered whatever he had done, and never thought of reflecting upon it, or finding fault with it. I let his fine qualities work upon me; for the rest, I went my own way."

We came back to Herder, and I asked Goethe which of his works he thought the best. "His *Ideas for the History of Mankind*," replied Goethe, "are undoubtedly the best. In after days, he took the negative side, and was not so agreeable."

"Considering the great weight of Herder," said I, "I cannot understand how he had so little judgment on some subjects. For instance, I cannot forgive him, especially at that period of German literature, for sending back the manuscript of *Goetz von Berlichingen* without any praise of its merits, and with taunting remarks. He must have utterly wanted organs to perceive some objects."

"Yes, Herder was unfortunate in this respect," replied Goethe; "nay," added he, with vivacity, "if his spirit were present at this conversation, it would not understand us."

"On the other hand," said I, "I must praise Merck, who urged you to print *Goetz*."

"He was indeed an odd but important man," said Goethe. "'Print the thing,' quoth he, 'it is worth nothing, but print it.' He did not wish me to make any alteration in it, and he was right; it would have been different, but not better."

Wednesday, November 24, 1824.

I went to see Goethe this evening, before going to the theatre. He inquired about the young Englishmen who are here. I told him that I proposed reading with Mr. Doolan a German translation of Plutarch. This led the conversation to Roman and Grecian history; and Goethe expressed himself as follows:

"Roman history is no longer suited to us. We have become too humane for the triumphs of Cæsar not to offend our feelings. Neither are we much charmed by the history of Greece. When this people turns against a foreign foe, it is indeed great and glorious; but the division of the states, and their eternal wars with one another, where Greek fights against Greek, are insufferable. Besides, the history of our own time is thoroughly great and important; the battles of Leipzig and Waterloo stand out with such prominence, that that of Marathon and others like it are gradually eclipsed. Neither are our individual heroes inferior to theirs; the French Marshals, Blücher, and Wellington, vie with any of the heroes of antiquity."

We then talked of the late French literature, and the daily increasing interest in German works manifested by the French.

"The French," said Goethe, "do well to study and translate our writers; for, limited as they are in both form and motives, they can only look without for means. We Germans may be reproached for a certain formlessness; but in matter we are their superiors. The theatrical productions of Kotzebue and Iffland are so rich in motives that they may pluck them a long time before all is used up. But, especially, our philosophical Ideality is welcome to them; for every Ideal is serviceable to revolutionary aims.

"The French have understanding and esprit, but neither a solid basis nor piety. What serves the moment, what helps his party, seems right to the Frenchman. Hence they praise us, never from an acknowledgment of our merits, but only when they can strengthen their party by our views."

We then talked about our own literature, and of the obstacles in the way of some of our latest young poets.

"Most of our young poets," said Goethe, "have no fault but this, that their subjectivity is not important, and that they cannot find matter in the objective. At best, they only find a material similar to themselves, which corresponds to their own subjectivity; but as for taking the material on its own account, when it is repugnant to the subjectivity, merely because it is poetical, such a thing is never thought of.

"Still, if we only had important personages, formed by great studies and situations in life, it might go well with us, at least as far as our young lyric poets are concerned."

Friday, December 3, 1824.

There has lately reached me a proposal to write for an

English periodical. I was much inclined to accept, but thought it would be good first to talk over the affair with Goethe.

I went to him this evening. The curtains were down, and he was seated before a table, on which dinner had been served, and on which burned two lights which illuminated at once his own face and a colossal bust before him on the table, at which he was looking. "Now," said Goethe, pointing at the bust, "who is this?" "Apparently a poet, and an Italian," I replied. "It is Dante," said he: "it is well done; a fine head, yet not very pleasing. He seems old, bowed down, and peevish; the features are lax, and drawn down, as if he had just come from hell. I have a medal struck during his life, and there everything appears much better."

He rose and brought the medal. "Do you see what power there is in the nose and the swell of the upper lip, the energy of the chin, and its fine blending with the cheek bone? The part about the eyes and the forehead are the same in this bust; but all the rest is weaker and older. Yet I will not find fault with the new work, which deserves praise."

Goethe then inquired what I had been doing and thinking about of late. I told him I had had a proposal to write for an English periodical, on very advantageous terms, monthly notices of the newest productions of the German prose *belles lettres*, and that I was inclined to accept the offer.

Goethe's face, which had hitherto worn so friendly an expression, clouded at these words, and I could read in every movement his disapproval.

"I wish," said he, "your friends would leave you in peace. Why should you trouble yourself with things quite out of your way and contrary to your tendencies? We have gold, silver, and paper money, and each has its own value; but, to do justice to each, you must understand the exchange. And so in literature. You understand the metallic, but not the paper currency: you are not equal to this; your criticisms will be unjust, and do hurt. If you wish to be just, to give everything its proper place, you must first become acquainted with our middle literature, and make up your mind to a study by no means trifling. You must look back and see what the Schlegels proposed and performed, and then read all our later authors—Franz Horn, Hoffmann, Clauren, etc. Even this is not enough. You must also take in all the journals of the day, from the *Morgenblatt* to the *Abend-Zeitung*, in order that no news may escape you; and thus you will spoil your best days and hours. Then all new books, which you would criticize with any profundity, you must not only skim over, but study. How would you relish that? And, finally, if you find that what is bad is bad, you must not say so, if you would not run the risk of being at war with all the world.

"No; decline the proposal; it is not in your way. Generally, beware of dissipating your powers, and strive to concentrate them. Had I been so wise thirty years ago, I should have done very differently. How much time I lost with Schiller on his *Horen* and *Musen-Almanachs*! Now, when I have been looking over our correspondence, I feel this most forcibly, and cannot think without chagrin on those undertakings, which made the world abuse us, and which were entirely without result for ourselves. Talent thinks it can do whatever it sees others doing; but this is not so, and it will have to repent its *Faux-frais* (idle expenses). What good does it do to curl up your hair for a single night? You have paper in your hair, that is all; next night, it is straight again.

"The great point," he continued, "is to make a capital that will not be exhausted. This you will acquire by the study of the English language and literature, which you have already begun. Keep to that, and continually make use of the advantages you now possess in the acquaintance of the young Englishmen. You studied the ancient languages but little during your youth; therefore, seek now a stronghold in the literature of so able a nation as the English. And, besides, our own literature is chiefly the offspring of theirs! Whence have we our novels, our tragedies, but from Goldsmith, Fielding, and Shakespeare? And in our own day, where will you find in Germany three literary heroes who can be placed on a level with Lord Byron, Moore, and Walter Scott? Once more, ground yourself in English, concentrate your powers for something good, and give up everything that can produce no result of consequence and is not suited to you."

I rejoiced that I had thus made Goethe speak. I determined to comply with his advice in every respect.

Chancellor von Müller was now announced, and sat down with us. The conversation turned once more on the bust of Dante, which stood before us, and on his life and works. The obscurity of this author was especially mentioned—how his own countrymen had never understood him, so that it would be impossible for a foreigner to penetrate such darkness. "To you," said Goethe, turning towards me, with a friendly air, "the study of this poet is hereby absolutely forbidden by your father confessor."

Goethe also remarked that the difficult rhyme is, in a great measure, the cause of his obscurity. For the rest, he spoke of Dante with extreme reverence; and I observed that he was not satisfied with the word *talent*, but called him a *nature*, as if thus wishing to express something more comprehensive, more full of prescience, of deeper insight, and wider scope.[1]

Thursday, December 9, 1824.

I went this evening to Goethe. He greeted me with praises of my poem *Schellhorn's Jubilee*. I told him that I had written to refuse the proposal from England.

"Thank Heaven!" said he; "then you are free and at peace once more. And now let me warn you against something else. The composers will come and want an opera; but you must be steadfast and refuse them, for that is a work that leads to nothing, and only loses time."

He then told me that he had sent the author of the *Paria*, who is now at Bonn, the play-bill, through Nees of Esenbeck, that the poet might see his piece had been played here. "Life is short," he added; "we must try to do one another a good turn."

The Berlin journals lay before him, and he told me of the great inundation at Petersburg. He gave me the paper to read, and talked about the bad situation of Petersburg, laughing approvingly at an expression of Rousseau's, who said that we could not hinder an earthquake by building a city near a burning mountain. "Nature goes her own way," said he, "and all that to us seems an exception is really according to order."

We then talked of the great tempests that had raged on every coast, and of other violent outbreaks of nature, mentioned in the journals; and I asked Goethe whether it was known how such things were connected. Goethe replied: "We have scarcely a suspicion respecting such mysteries, much less can we speak about them."

Coudray and Professor Riemer were announced. Both joined us, and the inundation of Petersburg was again discussed. M. Coudray, by drawing the plan of that city, showed us the position of the Neva, and the rest of the locality.

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[1] Personality, perhaps.

1825

Monday, January 10, 1825.

GOETHE, with his great interest for the English, has desired me to introduce to him the young Englishmen here at present. At five o'clock this afternoon, he expected me with Mr. H., the English engineer officer. We were conducted by the servant to a pleasant well-warmed apartment, where Goethe usually passes his afternoons and evenings. Three lights were burning on the table, but he was not there; we heard him talking in the adjoining saloon.

Mr. H. looked about him for a while, and observed, besides the pictures and a large chart of the mountains which adorned the walls, a book-case full of portfolios. These, I told him, contained many drawings from the hands of celebrated masters, and engravings after the best pictures of all schools, which Goethe had been gradually collecting.

After we had waited a few minutes, Goethe came in. He said to Mr. H., "I presume I may address you in German, as I hear you are already well versed in our language." Mr. H. answered with a few polite words, and Goethe requested us to be seated.

Mr. H.'s manners and appearance must have made a good impression on Goethe; for his sweetness and mild serenity were manifested towards the stranger in their real beauty. "You did well," said he, "to come hither to learn German; for here you will quickly and easily acquire a knowledge not only of the language but also of the elements on which it rests—our soil, climate, mode of life, manners, social habits, and constitution—and carry it away with you to England."

Mr. H. replied, "The interest taken in the German language is now great, so that there is scarcely a young Englishman of good family who does not learn German."

"We Germans," said Goethe, good-humouredly, "have, however, been half a century before your nation in this respect. For fifty years I have been busy with the English language and literature; so that I am well acquainted with your writers, your ways of living, and the administration of your country. If I went to England, I should be no stranger there.

"But, as I said, your young men do well to come to us and learn our language; for, not only does our literature merit attention on its own account, but he who now knows German well can dispense with many other languages. Of the French, I do not speak; it is the language of conversation, and indispensable in travelling, because everybody understands it, and in all countries we can get on with it instead of a good interpreter. But as for Greek, Latin, Italian, and Spanish: we can read the best works of those nations in such excellent German translations, that, unless we have some particular object in view, we need not spend much time upon the toilsome study of those languages. It is in the German nature to honour after its kind everything produced by other nations, and to accommodate itself to foreign peculiarities. This, with the great flexibility of our language, makes German translations thoroughly faithful and complete. And in general you get on very far with a good translation. Frederick the Great did not know Latin, but he read Cicero in the French translation with as much profit as we who read him in the original."

Then, turning the conversation on the theatre, he asked Mr. H. whether he went frequently thither. "Every evening," he replied, "and find that I thus gain much towards the understanding of the language."

"It is remarkable," said Goethe, "that the ear, and generally the understanding, gets the start of speaking; so that a man may very soon comprehend all he hears, but by no means express it all."

"I experience daily," said Mr. H., "the truth of that. I understand very well whatever I hear or read; I even feel when an incorrect expression is used in German. But when I speak, nothing will flow, and I cannot express myself as I wish. In light conversation at court, jests with the ladies, a chat at balls, and the like, I succeed pretty well. But, if I try to express an opinion on any important topic, to say anything peculiar or luminous, I cannot get on."

"Be not discouraged by that," said Goethe, "since it is hard enough to express such uncommon matters in one's own mother tongue."

He then asked what Mr. H. read in German literature. "I have read *Egmont*," he replied, "and found so much pleasure in the perusal that I returned to it three times. *Torquato*

Tasso, too, has afforded me much enjoyment. Now, I am reading *Faust,* but find that it is somewhat difficult."

Goethe laughed at these last words. "Really," said he, "I would not have advised you to undertake *Faust.* It is mad stuff, and goes quite beyond all ordinary feeling. But since you have done it of your own accord, without asking my advice, you will see how you will get through. Faust is so strange an individual, that only few can sympathize with his internal condition. Then the character of Mephistopheles is, on account of his irony, and also because he is a living result of an extensive acquaintance with the world, also very difficult. But you will see what lights open upon you. *Tasso,* on the other hand, lies far nearer the common feelings of mankind, and the detail of its form is favourable to easy comprehension."

"Yet," said Mr. H., "*Tasso* is thought difficult in Germany, and people have wondered to hear me say that I was reading it."

"What is chiefly needed for *Tasso,*" replied Goethe, "is that one should be no longer a child and should have been in good society. A young man of good family, with sufficient mind and delicacy, and also with outward culture such as will be produced by intercourse with accomplished men of the higher class, will not find *Tasso* difficult."

The conversation turning upon *Egmont,* he said, "I wrote *Egmont* in 1775—fifty years ago. I adhered closely to history. Ten years afterwards, when I was in Rome, I read in the newspapers that the revolutionary scenes in the Netherlands there described were exactly repeated. I saw from this that the world remains ever the same, and that my picture must have some life in it."

Amid this and similar conversation, the hour for the theatre had come.

As we went homeward, I asked Mr. H. how he was pleased with Goethe. "I have never," said he, "seen a man who, with all his attractive gentleness, had so much native dignity. However he may condescend, he is always the great man."

Tuesday, January 18, 1825.

I went to Goethe about five o'clock. I had not seen him for some days, and passed a delightful evening. I found him sitting in his working-room, and talking, during the twilight, with his son and Hofrath Rehbein his physician. I seated myself at the table with them. We talked a while in the dusk;

then lights were brought in, and I had the happiness to see Goethe looking fresh and cheerful.

As usual, he inquired with interest what had happened to me of late, and I replied that I had made the acquaintance of a poetess. I was able to praise her talent; and Goethe, who was likewise acquainted with some of her productions, agreed.

"One of her poems," said he, "in which she describes the country near her home, is peculiar. She has a good tendency towards outward objects, and is besides not destitute of valuable internal qualities. We might indeed find much fault with her; but we will not disturb her in the path her talent will show her."

Hofrath Rehbein remarked that the poetical talent of ladies often seemed to him as a sexual instinct of the intellect. "Hear him," said Goethe, laughing, and looking at me; "sexual instinct, indeed! how the physician explains it!"

"I know not," said Rehbein, "whether I express myself right; but it is something of the sort. Usually, these beings have not been fortunate in love, and they now seek compensation in intellectual pursuits. Had they been married in time, and borne children, they would never have thought of poetical productions."

"I will not inquire," said Goethe, "how far you are right in this case; but, as to the talents of ladies in other departments, I have always found that they ceased on marriage. I have known girls who drew finely; but so soon as they became wives and mothers it was all over: they were busy with their children, and never touched a pencil.

"But our poetesses," continued he, with much animation, "might write and poetize as they pleased if only our men would not write like women. This is what does not please me. Look at our periodicals and annuals; see how all becomes weaker and weaker. Were a chapter of Cellini now printed in the *Morgenblatt*, what a figure it would make!

"However, let us forget all that, and rejoice in our brave girl at Halle, who with masculine spirit introduces us into the Serbian world. These poems are excellent. There are some among them worthy of comparison with Solomon's Song, and that is saying something. I have finished my essay on them, and it is already in type." With these words he handed me the first four proof-sheets of a new number of *Kunst und Alterthum*, containing the essay. "I have," said he, "characterized these poems according to their chief subjects, and I think you will be pleased with the valuable *motifs*. Rehbein, too, is not ignorant of poetry—at least as to its import and material—he may like to hear you read this aloud."

I read slowly the subjects of the single poems. The situations indicated were so marked and expressive, that at each word a whole poem was revealed to my eye—the following especially:

1. Modesty of a Serbian girl, who never raises her beautiful eyelashes.
2. Conflict in the mind of a lover, who, as groomsman, is obliged to conduct his beloved to another.
3. Being distressed about her lover, the girl will not sing, lest she should seem gay.
4. Complaint of the corruption of manners; how youths marry widows, and old men virgins.
5. Complaint of a youth that a mother gives her daughter too much liberty.
6. Confidingly joyous talk of a girl with the steed, who betrays to her his master's inclinations and designs.
7. The maiden will not have him she cannot love.
8. The fair barmaid: her lover is not among the guests.
9. Finding and tender awakening of the beloved.
10. What trade shall my husband be?
11. Joys of love lost by babbling.
12. The lover comes from abroad, watches her by day, surprises her at night.

I remarked that these mere *motifs* excited in me such lively emotions, that I felt as if I were reading the poems themselves, and had no desire for the details.

Said Goethe, "Here you see the great importance of *motifs*, which people cannot be got to understand. Our women have no notion of it. 'That poem is beautiful,' they say; and by this they mean nothing but the feelings, the words, the verses. Nobody dreams that the true power of a poem consists in the situation—in the *motifs*. And for this very reason, thousands of poems are written, where the *motif* is nothing at all, and which merely through feeling and sounding verse reflect a sort of existence. Dilettanti, and especially women, have very weak ideas of poetry. They usually think, if they could but get quit of the technical part, they would have the essential, and would be quite accomplished; but they are much mistaken."

Professor Riemer was announced, Rehbein took leave, and Riemer sat down with us. The conversation still turned on the *motifs* of the Serbian love-poems. Riemer was acquainted with the topic, and said that, according to the table of contents given above, not only could poems be made, but the same *motifs* had been already used by the Germans without any knowledge that they had been treated in Serbia. He mentioned some poems of his own, and I mentioned some poems by Goethe, which had occurred to me during the reading.

"The world," said Goethe, "remains always the same; situations are repeated; one people lives, loves, and feels like another; why should not one poet write like another? The situations of life are alike; why then should those of poems be unlike?"

"This very similarity in life and sensation," said Riemer, "makes us all able to appreciate the poetry of other nations. If this were not the case, we should never know what foreign poems were about."

Said I, "That is why I am always surprised at the way the learned seem to suppose that poetizing proceeds, not from life to the poem, but from the book to the poem. They are always saying, 'He got this here; he got that there.' If, for instance, they find passages in Shakespeare which are also to be found in the ancients, they say he must have taken them from the ancients. Thus there is a situation in Shakespeare, where, on the sight of a beautiful girl, the parents are congratulated who call her daughter, and the youth who will lead her home as his bride. And because the same thing occurs in Homer, Shakespeare forsooth has taken it from Homer.[1] How odd! As if we had to go so far for such things, and they were not before our eyes, felt, and uttered, every day."

"Ah, yes," said Goethe, "it is very ridiculous."

"Lord Byron, too," said I, "is no wiser, when he takes *Faust* to pieces, and thinks you found one thing here, the other there."

"The greater part of those fine things cited by Lord Byron," said Goethe, "I have never even read; much less did I think of them when I was writing *Faust*. But Lord Byron is only great as a poet; as soon as he reflects, he is a child. He knows not how to help himself against stupid attacks of the same kind made upon him by his own countrymen. He ought to have expressed himself more strongly against them. 'What is there is mine,' he should have said; 'and whether I got it from a book or from life, is of no consequence; the only point is, whether I have made a right use of it.' Walter Scott used a scene from my *Egmont*, and he had a right to do so; and because he did it well, he deserves praise. He has also copied the character of my Mignon in one of his romances; but whether with equal judgment, is another question. Lord Byron's transformed Devil[1] is a continuation of Mephistopheles, and quite right too. If, from the whim of originality, he had departed from the model, he would certainly have fared worse. Thus, my Mephistopheles sings a song from Shakespeare, and why should he not? Why should I give myself the trouble of inventing one of my own, when this said just what was wanted? Also, if the prologue to my *Faust* is something like the beginning of Job, that is again quite right, and I am rather to be praised than censured."

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[1] Eckermann here shows acquaintance with a method since rendered familiar by Baconians.

Goethe, in the best humour, sent for a bottle of wine, and filled for Riemer and me; he himself drank Marienbad water. He seemed to have appointed this evening for looking over, with Riemer, the manuscript of the continuation of his autobiography, perhaps in order to improve it here and there, in point of expression. "Let Eckermann stay and hear it too," said Goethe; and he then laid the manuscript before Riemer, who began to read, commencing with the year 1795.

In the course of the summer, I had had the pleasure of repeatedly reading and reflecting on the still unpublished record of those years, down to the latest time. But now, to hear them read aloud in Goethe's presence afforded a new enjoyment. Riemer paid especial attention to the mode of expression; and I had occasion to admire his great dexterity and his affluence of words and phrases. But in Goethe's mind the epoch of life described was revived; he revelled in recollections, and, on the mention of single persons and events, filled out the written narrative with oral details. That was a memorable evening! The most distinguished of his contemporaries were talked over; but the conversation always came back to Schiller, who was so interwoven with this period, from 1795 to 1800. The theatre had been the object of their united efforts, and Goethe's best works belong to this time. *Wilhelm Meister* was completed; *Hermann und Dorothea* planned and written; *Cellini* translated for the *Horen*; the *Xenien* written by both for Schiller's *Musen-*

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[1] This, doubtless, means the *Deformed Transformed*; and the fact that this poem was not published till January 1824, rendering it probable that Goethe had not actually seen it, accounts for the inaccuracy of the expression.—J. O.

Almanach;—every day brought with it points of contact. Of all this we talked, and Goethe had full opportunity for the most interesting reminiscences.

"*Hermann und Dorothea*," said he, "is almost the only one of my larger poems that still satisfies me; I can never read it without strong interest. I love it best in the Latin translation; there it seems to me nobler, and as if it had returned to its original form."

Wilhelm Meister was often a subject of discourse. "Schiller blamed me for interweaving tragic elements which do not belong to the novel. Yet he was wrong, as we all know. In his letters to me, there are most important views and opinions with respect to *Wilhelm Meister*. But this work is one of the most incalculable productions; I myself scarcely have the key to it. People seek a central point; that is hard, and not even right. I should think a rich manifold life, brought close to our eyes, would be enough without any express tendency; which, after all, is only for the intellect. But if anything of the sort is insisted upon, it will perhaps be found in the words Frederic at the end addresses to the hero: 'Thou seem'st to me like Saul, the son of Kish, who went out to seek his father's asses, and found a kingdom.' Keep to this; for, in fact, the whole work seems to say nothing more than that man, despite all his follies and errors, being led by a higher hand, reaches some happy goal at last."

We then talked of the high degree of culture that had become general among the middle classes of Germany during the last fifty years, and Goethe ascribed this not so much to Lessing as to Herder and Wieland. "Lessing," said he, "was of the very highest understanding, and only one equally great could truly learn of him. To a half-faculty he was dangerous." He mentioned a journalist who had formed himself on Lessing, and, at the end of the last century, had played a part indeed—but far from a noble one, he was so inferior to his predecessor.

"All Upper Germany," said he, "is indebted to Wieland for its style. It has learned much from him; not least the capability of expressing itself correctly."

On mention of the *Xenien*,[1] he especially praised those of Schiller, which he called sharp and biting, while he called his own innocent and trivial.

"The *Thierkreis* (Zodiac), which is by Schiller," said he,

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[1] It need scarcely be mentioned that this is the name given to a collection of sarcastic epigrams by Goethe and Schiller.—J. O.

"I always read with admiration. The good effects which the *Xenien* had upon the German literature of their time are beyond calculation." Many persons against whom the *Xenien* were directed were mentioned on this occasion, but their names have escaped my memory.

After we had read and talked over the manuscript to the end of the year 1800, interrupted by these and innumerable other observations from Goethe, he put aside the papers, and had a little supper placed at one end of the table at which we were sitting. We partook of it, but Goethe did not touch a morsel; indeed, I have never seen him eat in the evening. He sat down with us, filled our glasses, snuffed the candles, and regaled us intellectually. His remembrance of Schiller was so lively that the conversation during the latter part of the evening was devoted to him alone.

Riemer spoke of Schiller's personal appearance. "The build of his limbs, his gait in the street, all his motions," said he, "were proud; his eyes only were soft."

"Yes," said Goethe, "everything else about him was proud and majestic, only the eyes were soft. And his talent was like his outward form. He seized boldly on a great subject, and turned it this way and that. But he saw his object only on the outside; a quiet development from its interior was not within his province. His talent was more desultory. Thus he was never decided—could never have *done*. He often changed a part just before a rehearsal.

"And, as he went so boldly to work, he did not take sufficient pains about *motifs*. I recollect what trouble I had with him, when he wanted to make Gessler, in *Tell*, abruptly break an apple from the tree, and have it shot from the boy's head. This was quite against my nature, and I urged him to give at least some motive to this barbarity, by making the boy boast to Gessler of his father's dexterity, and say that he could shoot an apple from a tree at a hundred paces. Schiller, at first, would have nothing of the sort; but at last he yielded to my arguments and intentions, and did as I advised him. I, on the other hand, by too great attention to *motifs*, kept my pieces from the theatre. My *Eugenie*[1] is nothing but a chain of *motifs*, and this cannot succeed on the stage.

"Schiller's genius was really made for the theatre. With every piece he progressed, and became more finished; but, strange to say, a certain love for the horrible adhered to him from the time of the *Robbers*, which never quite left him even in his prime. I recollect that in the prison scene in my *Egmont*, where the sentence is read to him, Schiller would have made Alva appear in the background, masked and muffled in a cloak, enjoying the effect the sentence would produce on Egmont. Thus Alva was to show himself insatiable in revenge and malice. I, however, protested, and prevented the apparition. He was a great, odd man.

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[1] *Die Natürliche Tochter* (The Natural Daughter).—J. O.

"Every week he became different and more finished; each time I saw him he seemed to me to have advanced in learning and judgment. His letters are the fairest memorials of him that I possess, and they are also among the best of his writings. His last letter I preserve as a sacred relic." He rose and fetched it. "See and read it," said he, giving it to me.

It was a very fine letter, written in a bold hand. It contained an opinion of Goethe's notes to *Rameau's Nephew*, which exhibit French literature at that time, and which he had given Schiller to look over. I read the letter aloud to Riemer. "You see," said Goethe, "how apt and consistent is his judgment, and that the handwriting nowhere shows trace of weakness. He was a splendid man, and went from us in all the fulness of his strength. This letter is dated the 24th of April, 1805. Schiller died on the 9th of May."

We looked at the letter by turns, and were pleased with the clear style and fine handwriting. Goethe gave further affectionate reminiscence of his friend, until it was nearly eleven o'clock, and we departed.

Thursday, February 24, 1825.

"If I were still superintendent of the theatre," said Goethe, this evening, "I would bring out Byron's *Doge of Venice*. The piece is indeed long, and would require shortening. Nothing, however, should be cut out; but the import of each scene should be taken, and expressed more concisely. The piece would thus be brought closer together, without being damaged by alterations; and it would gain powerful effect, without essential loss of beauty."

This opinion of Goethe's gave me a new view as to how we might proceed on the stage, in a hundred similar cases; it requires, however, a fine intellect—nay, a poet, who understands his vocation.

We talked more about Lord Byron; and I mentioned how, in his conversations with Medwin, he had said there was something extremely difficult and unthankful in writing for the theatre. "The great point is," said Goethe, "for the poet to strike into the path which the taste and interest of the public have taken. If the direction of his talent accords with that of the public, everything is gained. Houwald hit this path with his *Bild* (Picture), and hence the universal applause he received. Lord Byron, perhaps, would not have been so fortunate, as his tendency was not that of the public. The greatness of the poet is not the main requisite. On the contrary, one who is little elevated above the general public may gain the most general favour precisely on that account."

We continued about Byron, and Goethe said: "That which I call invention I never saw in anyone in the world to a greater degree. His manner of loosing a dramatic knot is always better than one would anticipate."

"That," said I, "is what I feel about Shakespeare—especially when Falstaff has entangled himself in a net of falsehoods, and I ask myself what I should do to help him out; for I find Shakespeare surpasses all my notions. That you say the same of Lord Byron is the highest praise. Nevertheless," I added, "the poet who takes a clear survey of beginning and end, has by far the advantage with the biassed reader."

Goethe agreed with me, and laughed to think that Lord Byron, who in practical life could never adapt himself and never even asked about a law, finally subjected himself to the stupidest of laws—that of the *three unities*.

"He understood the purpose of this law," said he, "no better than the rest of the world. *Comprehensibility* [1] is the purpose, and the three unities are only so far good as they conduce to this end. If the observance of them hinders the comprehension of a work, it is foolish to treat them as laws. Even the Greeks, from whom the rule was taken, did not always follow it. In the *Phaeton* of Euripides, and in other pieces, there is a change of place; and it is obvious that good representation of their subject was with them more important than blind obedience to law, which in itself is of no great consequence. The pieces of Shakespeare deviate, as far as possible, from the unities of time and place; but they are comprehensible—nothing more so—and on this account the Greeks would have found no fault in them. The French poets have endeavoured to follow most rigidly the laws of the three unities—but they sin against comprehensibility; for they solve a dramatic law, not dramatically, but by narration."

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[1] We unwillingly adopt this uncouth word as the equivalent for "das Fassliche." The American translator uses the word "illusion," but this would be rather a result of "das Fassliche" than the thing itself.—J. O.

[Eckermann calls to mind Houwald's *Feinde* (Enemies), spoilt by adherence to "the unities"—as contrasted with the success achieved in *Goetz von Berlichingen*, wherein the unities are disregarded.]

Goethe continued to talk of Lord Byron. "With that disposition," said he, "which always leads him into the illimitable, the restraint he imposed upon himself by the observance of the three unities becomes him. If he had but known how to endure moral restraint also! That he could not was his ruin; it may be said he was destroyed by his own unbridled temperament.

"But he was too much in the dark about himself. He lived impetuously for the day, and neither knew nor thought what he was doing. Permitting everything to himself, and excusing nothing in others, he necessarily put himself in a bad position, and made the world his foe. At the very beginning, he offended the most distinguished literary men by his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. To be permitted only to live after this, he was obliged to go back a step. In his succeeding works, he continued in the path of opposition and fault-finding. Church and State were not left unassailed. This reckless conduct drove him from England, and would in time have driven him from Europe also. Everywhere it was too narrow for him, with the most perfect personal freedom he felt confined; the world seemed a prison. His Grecian expedition was the result of no voluntary resolution; his misunderstanding with the world drove him to it.

"Not only did the renunciation of what was hereditary and patriotic cause the personal destruction of this distinguished man; but his revolutionary turn, and the constant mental agitation with which it was combined, did not allow his talent a fair development. Moreover, his perpetual negation and fault-finding is injurious even to his excellent works. For not only does the discontent of the poet infect the reader, but the end of all opposition is negation; and negation is nothing. If I call *bad* bad, what do I gain? But if I call *good* bad, I do a great deal of mischief. He who will work aright must never rail, must not trouble himself at all about what is ill done, but only do well himself. The great point is, not to pull down, but to build up; in this humanity finds pure joy.

"Lord Byron," continued Goethe, "is to be regarded as a man, as an Englishman, and as a great talent. His good qualities belong chiefly to the man, his bad to the Englishman and the peer, his talent is incommensurable.

"All Englishmen are, as such, without reflection, properly so called; distractions and party spirit will not permit them to perfect themselves in quiet. But they are great as practical men.

"Thus, Lord Byron could never attain reflection on himself, and on this account his maxims in general are not successful, as is shown by his creed, 'much money, no authority,' for much money always paralyses authority.[1]

"But where he will create, he always succeeds; with him inspiration supplies the place of reflection. He was obliged to go on poetizing; and then everything that came from the man, especially from his heart, was excellent. He produced his best things as women do pretty children, without thinking about it or knowing how it was done.

"He is a great talent, a born talent, and I never saw the true poetical power greater in any man. In the apprehension of external objects, and a clear penetration into past situations, he is quite as great as Shakespeare. But, as a pure individuality, Shakespeare is his superior. This was felt by Byron; and on this account he does not say much of Shakespeare, although he knows whole passages by heart. He would willingly have denied him altogether; for Shakespeare's cheerfulness is in his way, and he feels that he is no match for it. Pope he does not deny, for he had no cause to fear him: on the contrary, he mentions him, and shows him respect when he can; for he knows well enough that Pope is a mere foil to himself."

Goethe seemed inexhaustible on the subject of Byron. After a few digressions, he proceeded thus:

"His high rank as an English peer was very injurious to Byron; for every talent is oppressed by the outer world—how much more, then, when there is such high birth and so great a fortune? A middle rank is much more favourable to talent, so we find all great artists and poets in the middle classes. Byron's predilection for the unbounded could not have been nearly so dangerous with more humble birth and smaller means. As it was, he was able to put every fancy into practice, and this involved him in innumerable scrapes. Besides, how could one of such high rank be inspired with awe and respect by any rank whatever? He spoke out whatever he felt, and this brought him into ceaseless conflict with the world.

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[1] This paragraph, somewhat incomprehensible, seems to be a faithful rendering of the German.

"It is surprising to remark," continued Goethe, "how large a portion of the life of a rich Englishman of rank is passed in duels and elopements. Lord Byron himself says, that his father carried off three ladies. And let any man be a steady son after that.

"Properly speaking, he lived perpetually in a state of nature, and with his mode of existence the necessity for self-defence floated daily before his eyes. Hence his constant pistol-shooting. Every moment he expected to be called out.

"He could not live alone. Hence, with all his oddities, he was very indulgent to his associates. He one evening read his fine poem on the death of Sir John Moore,[1] and his noble friends did not know what to make of it. This did not move him, but he put it away again. As a poet, he really showed himself a lamb. Another would have commended them to the devil."

(Sup.) Tuesday, March 22, 1825.

Last night, soon after twelve o'clock, we were awoke by an alarm of fire; we heard cries, "The theatre is on fire!" I threw on my clothes, and hastened to the spot. Only a few hours before, we had been delighted by the excellent acting of La Roche in Cumberland's *Jew*, and Seidel had excited universal laughter by his good humour and jokes. And now, in the place so lately the scene of intellectual pleasures, raged the most terrible element of destruction.

The fire, which was occasioned by the heating apparatus, appears to have broken out in the pit; it soon spread to the stage and the dry lath-work of the wings, and, as it fearfully increased by the great quantity of combustible material, it was not long before the flames burst through the roof, and the rafters gave way.

There was no deficiency of preparations for extinguishing the fire. The building was, by degrees, surrounded by engines, which poured an immense quantity of water upon the flames. All, however, was without avail. The fire raged upwards as before, and threw up to the dark sky an inexhaustible mass of glowing sparks and burning particles of light materials, which then, with a light breeze, passed sideways over the town. Loud was the noise of the cries and calls of the men working the fire-ladders and engines. All seemed determined to subdue the flames. On one side, as near to the spot as the fire allowed, stood a man in a cloak and military cap, smoking a cigar with the greatest composure. At the first glance, he appeared to be an idle spectator; but there were several persons to whom, in a few words, he gave commands, which were immediately executed. It was the Grand Duke Charles Augustus. He had soon seen that the building itself could not be saved; he therefore ordered that it should be left to fall, and that all the superfluous engines should be turned upon the neighbouring houses, which were much exposed to the fire. He appeared to think with princely resignation:

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[1] Medwin, who reported the conversations of Byron, apparently believed that Charles Wolfe's poem *The Burial of Sir John Moore*, was by Byron himself. Goethe depends upon Medwin, presumably.

Let *that* burn down,
With greater beauty will it rise again.

He was not wrong. The theatre was old, by no means beautiful; and for a long time it had been too small to accommodate the annually increasing public. Nevertheless, it was lamentable to see it thus irreparably destroyed, with so many reminiscences of a past time, illustrious and endeared to Weimar.

I saw in beautiful eyes many tears which flowed for its downfall. I was no less touched by the grief of a member of the orchestra, who wept for his burnt violin. As the day dawned, I saw many pale countenances. I remarked several girls and women of high rank, who had watched the fire all night, and who now shivered in the cold morning air. I returned home to take a little rest, and in the forenoon I called upon Goethe.

The servant told me he was unwell and in bed: still, he had me called to his side. He stretched out his hand to me. "We have all sustained a loss," said he; "what is to be done? My little Wolf came early this morning to my bedside. He seized my hand, and looking full at me said, 'So is it with *human things*.' What more can be said, than these words of my beloved Wolf's? The theatre, the scene of my love-labours for nearly thirty years, lies in ashes. But, as Wolf says, 'so is it with human things.' I have slept but little during the night; from my front windows I saw the flames rising towards the sky.

"You can imagine that many thoughts of old times, of my many years' exertions with Schiller, and of the progress of many a favourite pupil, passed through my mind, not without causing emotion. Hence, I intend to remain in bed to-day."

I praised him for his forethought. Still, he did not appear to me in the least weak or exhausted, but in a very pleasant and serene mood. This lying in bed seemed to me to be an old stratagem of war, which he is accustomed to adopt on any extraordinary event, when he fears a crowd of visitors.

Goethe begged me to be seated on a chair before his bed, and to stay there a little time. "I have thought much of you, and pitied you," said he. "What will you do with your evenings now?"

"You know," returned I, "how passionately I love the theatre. When I came here, two years ago, I knew nothing at all, except three or four pieces which I had seen in Hanover. All was new to me, actors as well as pieces; and since, according to your advice, I have given myself up entirely to the impression of the subject, without much thinking or reflecting, I can say with truth, that I have, during these two winters, passed at the theatre the most harmless and most agreeable hours that I have ever known. I was, moreover, so infatuated with the theatre, that I not only missed no performance, but also obtained admission to the rehearsals; nay, not contented with this, if, as I passed in the day-time, I found the doors open, I would enter, and sit for half an hour upon an empty bench in the pit, imagining scenes that might be played there."

"You are a madman," returned Goethe, laughing; "but that is what I like. Would to God that the whole public consisted of such children! And in fact you are right. Anyone who is sufficiently young, and who is not quite spoiled, could not easily find any place that would suit him so well as a theatre. Nobody asks you any questions; you need not open your mouth unless you choose; on the contrary, you sit quite at your ease like a king, and let everything pass before you, and recreate your mind and senses to your heart's content. There is poetry, there is painting, there are singing and music, there is acting, and what not besides! When all these arts, and the charm of youth and beauty heightened to an important degree, work in concert on the same evening, it is a bouquet to which no other can compare. But, even when part is bad and part is good, it is still better than looking out of window, or playing a game at whist in a close party amid the smoke of cigars. The theatre at Weimar is, as you feel, by no means to be despised; it is still an old trunk from our best time, to which new talents have attached themselves; and we can still produce something that pleases, and at least gives the appearance of an organized whole."

"Would I had seen it twenty or thirty years ago," answered I. "That was certainly a time," replied Goethe, "when we were assisted by great advantages. The tedious period of French taste had not long gone by; the public was not yet spoiled by over-excitement; the influence of Shakespeare was in all its first freshness; the operas of Mozart were new; and lastly, the pieces of Schiller were first produced here year after year, and were given at the theatre of Weimar in all their first glory, under his own superintendence. Consider all this, and you will imagine what a fine banquet was given to old and young. We always had a grateful public."

I remarked, "Older persons, who lived in those times, cannot praise that period of the Weimar theatre highly enough."

"I will not deny that it was something," returned Goethe. "The main point, however, was this, that the Grand Duke left my hands quite free; I could do just as I liked. I did not look to magnificent scenery and a brilliant wardrobe; I looked to good pieces. From tragedy to farce, every species was welcome; but a piece was obliged to have something in it to find favour. It had to be great and clever, cheerful and graceful, and at all events healthy and containing some pith. All that was morbid, weak, lachrymose, and sentimental, as well as all that was frightful, horrible, and offensive to decorum, was excluded; I should have feared, by such expedients, to spoil both actors and audience.

"By means of good pieces, I raised the actors; for the study of excellence, and the perpetual practice of excellence, must necessarily make something of a man whom nature has not left ungifted. I was also constantly in contact with the actors. I attended the first rehearsals,[1] and explained to everyone his part; I was present at the chief rehearsals, and talked with the actors as to any improvements that might be made; I was never absent from a performance, and I pointed out the next day anything that seemed wrong. By these means I advanced them in their art.

"But I also sought to raise the whole class in the esteem of society, by introducing the best and most promising into my own circle, and thus showing that I considered them worthy of social intercourse with myself. The result was, that the rest of the higher society in Weimar did not remain behind me, and that actors and actresses gained admission into the best circles. By all this, they acquired a great internal as well as external culture. My scholar Wolf, in Berlin, and our Dürand, are people of the finest tact in society. Oels and Graff have enough of the higher order of culture to do honour to the best circles.

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[1] The word "Leseprobe," which is here used, answers exactly to the English stage technicality—the "reading." The chief rehearsals, "Haupt proben," are by us simply called "rehearsals."—J. O.

"Schiller proceeded in the same spirit: he had a great deal of intercourse with actors and actresses. Like me, he was present at every rehearsal; and after every successful performance of one of his pieces, it was his custom to invite the actors, and to spend a merry day with them. All rejoiced together at whatever had succeeded, and discussed how anything might be done better next time. But, even when Schiller joined us, he found both actors and the public already cultivated to a high degree; and it is not to be denied that this conduced to the rapid success of his pieces."

"This burning of the house," said I, "in which you and Schiller, during a long course of years, effected so much good, closes a great epoch, which will not soon return for Weimar. You must have experienced great pleasure in your direction of the theatre, and its extraordinary success."

"And not a little trouble and difficulty," returned Goethe, with a sigh.

"It must be difficult," said I, "to keep such a many-headed being in proper order."

"A great deal," said Goethe, "may be done by severity; more by love; but most by clear discernment and impartial justice, which pays no respect to persons. I had to beware of two enemies, which might have been dangerous to me. One was my passionate love of talent, which might easily have made me partial. The other I will not mention, but you can guess it. At our theatre there was no want of ladies, who were beautiful and young, and who were possessed of great mental charms. I felt a passionate inclination towards many of them, and sometimes it happened that I was met half-way. But I restrained myself, and said, No farther! I knew my position, and also what I owed to it. I stood here, not as a private man, but as chief of an establishment the prosperity of which was of more consequence to me than a momentary gratification. If I had involved myself in any love affair, I should have been like a compass which cannot point right when under the influence of a magnet at its side. By thus keeping myself clear, and remaining master of myself, I also remained master of the theatre, and I always received that respect without which all authority is very soon at an end."

This confession of Goethe's deeply impressed me. I had already heard something of this kind about him from others, and I rejoiced now to hear its confirmation from his own mouth.

I returned to the scene of the fire, where flames and columns of smoke were rising from the great heap of ruins. People were still occupied in extinguishing and pulling to pieces. I found near the spot a burnt fragment of a written part. It contained passages from Goethe's *Tasso*.

(Sup.) Thursday, March 24, 1825.

I dined with Goethe. The loss of the theatre was almost the exclusive subject of conversation. Frau von Goethe and Fräulein Ulrica recalled to mind the happy hours they had enjoyed in the old house. They had been getting some relics from amongst the rubbish—which they considered invaluable; but which were, after all, nothing but stones and burnt pieces of carpet. Still, these were from the precise spot in the balcony where they had been used to sit.

"The principal thing is," said Goethe, "to recover oneself, and get in order as soon as possible. I should like the performances to recommence next week, in the palace or in the great town-hall, no matter which. Too long a pause must not be allowed, lest the public should seek some other resource for its tedious evenings."

"But," it was observed, "there are scarcely any of the decorations saved."

"There is no need of much decoration," returned Goethe. "Neither is there a necessity for great pieces. It is not even necessary to perform whole pieces at all, much less a great whole. The main point is, to choose something in which no great change of scene takes place: perhaps a one-act comedy, or a one-act farce, or operetta. Then, perhaps, some air, duet, or finale, from a favourite opera; and you will be very passably entertained. We have only to get through April, for in May you have the songsters of the woods.

"In the meantime," continued Goethe, "you will, during the summer months, witness the spectacle of the rearing of a new house. This fire appears to me very remarkable. I will now confess to you, that, during the long winter evenings, I have occupied myself with Coudray in drawing the plan of a new handsome theatre suitable to Weimar. We had sent for the ground-plans and sections of some of the principal German theatres; and by taking what was best, and avoiding what appeared defective, we made a sketch that will be worth looking at. As soon as the Grand Duke gives permission, the building may be commenced, and it is no trifle that this accident found us so wonderfully prepared."

We received this intelligence of Goethe's with great joy.

"In the old house," continued Goethe, "the nobility were accommodated in the balcony, and the servants and young artisans in the gallery. Most of the well-to-do middle class were not well provided for; when, at certain performances, the students occupied the pit, these respectable persons did not know where to go. The few small boxes behind the pit, and the few stalls, were not sufficient. Now we have managed much better. We have a whole tier of boxes running round the pit; and another tier, of the second rank, between the balcony and the gallery. By these means we gain a great many places, without enlarging the house too much."

We rejoiced at this communication, and praised Goethe for his kind consideration of the theatre and the public.

To lend my assistance to the future theatre, I went after dinner with my friend Robert Doolan to Upper Weimar, and, over a cup of coffee at the inn, began to make the libretto of an opera, after the *Issipile* of Metastasio. The first thing was to write a programme, so as to cast the piece with all the favourite singers (male and female) belonging to the Weimar theatre. This gave us pleasure almost as if we were again seated before the orchestra.

We then set to work in good earnest, and finished a great part of the first act.

(Sup.) Sunday, March 27, 1825.

I dined at Goethe's with a large party. He showed us the design for the new theatre. It was as he had told us a few days ago; the plan promised a very beautiful building, externally and internally.

It was remarked that so pretty a theatre required beautiful decorations, and better costumes than the former one. We were also of opinion that the company had gradually become incomplete, and that some distinguished young members should be engaged—both for drama and for opera. At the same time, we recognized that all this would be attended with greater expense than the present state of the treasury would allow.

"I know very well," said Goethe, "that under pretext of sparing the treasury, some insignificant persons will be engaged who will not cost much. But we cannot expect to benefit the treasury by such means. Nothing injures the treasury more. Our aim must be to have a full house every evening; and a young singer, male or female, a clever hero, and a clever young heroine with some beauty, will do much towards this end. Ay, if I still stood at the head of the direction, I would now go a step farther for the benefit of the treasury, and I should not be without the money required."

Goethe was asked what he meant by this.

"I would have performances on Sundays. I should thus have the receipts of at least forty more evenings, and it would be hard if the treasury did not thus gain ten or fifteen thousand dollars a year."

This expedient was thought very practical. It was mentioned, that to the great working-class, who are usually occupied until late at night on week-days, Sunday is the only day of recreation, when they would prefer the more noble pleasures of a play to a dance and beer at a village inn. It was also the general opinion, that all the farmers and landowners, as well as the officials and wealthy inhabitants of the small towns in the neighbourhood, would consider the Sunday as a desirable day to go to the theatre at Weimar. Besides, at the present time, a Sunday evening at Weimar was very dreary and tedious for everyone who did not go to court, or was not a member of a happy family circle or a select society; isolated individuals did not know where to go.

Goethe's idea of permitting Sunday performances, according to the custom in all other German towns, was greeted as a very happy one. Only a slight doubt arose, as to whether the court would approve of it.

"The court of Weimar," returned Goethe, "is too good and too wise to oppose any regulation which would conduce to the benefit of the town and an important institution. The court will certainly make the small sacrifice of altering its Sunday soirées to another day. But if this were not agreeable, we could find for the Sundays enough pieces which the court does not like but which would suit the common people and would fill the treasury."

The conversation then turned upon actors, and much was said about the use and abuse of their powers.

"I have, during my long practice," said Goethe, "found that the main point is never to allow any play, or scarcely an opera, to be studied, unless with some certainty of a good success for years. The expenditure of power demanded for the study of a five-act play, or even an opera of equal length, is not sufficiently considered. Much is required before a singer has thoroughly mastered a part through all the scenes and acts, much more before the choruses go as they ought.

"I am horrified, when I hear how lightly people give orders for the study of an opera of the success of which they truly know nothing and of which they have only heard through some very uncertain newspaper notice. As we in Germany already possess very tolerable means of travelling, and are even beginning to have diligences, I would, on learning of any new opera being produced and praised, send to the spot the *Regisseur* or some other trustworthy member of the theatre, that by his presence at an actual representation he might be convinced how far it was good for anything, and whether our forces were sufficient for it. The expense of such a journey would be inconsiderable in comparison with the enormous advantage, and mistakes would be avoided.

"And then, when a good play or a good opera has once been studied, it should be represented at short intervals—be allowed to 'run' as long as it draws. The same plan would be applicable to a good old play, or a good old opera; which has perhaps been long laid aside, and which now requires not a little fresh study to be reproduced with success. Such a representation should be repeated at short intervals, as frequently as the public shows any interest in it. The craze for something new, for seeing a good and most painfully studied play or opera, only once, or at the most twice—even allowing six or eight weeks to elapse between such repetitions, in which time a new study becomes necessary—is a real detriment to the theatre, and an unpardonable misuse of the talents of the performers engaged in it."

Goethe appeared to consider this matter very important; and it seemed to lie so near his heart that he became more warm than, with his calm disposition, is usual.

"In Italy," continued Goethe, "they perform the same opera every evening for four or six weeks, and the great Italian children by no means desire any change. The polished Parisian sees the classical plays of his great poets so often that he knows them by heart and has a practised ear for the accentuation of every syllable. Here in Weimar they have done me the honour to perform my *Iphigenia* and my *Tasso*, but how often? Scarcely once in three or four years. The public finds them tedious. Very probably. The actors are not in practice to play the pieces, and the public is not in practice to hear them. If through frequent repetitions the actors entered so much into the spirit of their parts that their representation gained life, as if it were not the result of study and everything flowed from their own hearts, the public would assuredly no longer be uninterested and unmoved.

"I really had the notion once that it was possible to form a German drama. Nay, I even fancied I myself could contribute to it, and lay some foundation-stones for such an edifice. I wrote my *Iphigenia* and my *Tasso*, with a childish hope that thus it might be brought about. But there was no emotion or excitement—all remained as it was before. If I had produced an effect, and had met with applause, I would have written a round dozen of pieces such as *Iphigenia* and *Tasso*. There was no deficiency of material. But, as I said, actors to represent such pieces with life and spirit were lacking, as was a public to hear and receive them with sympathy."

(Sup.) Wednesday, March 30, 1825.

This evening to a great tea-party at Goethe's, where I found a young American, besides the young Englishmen. I also had the pleasure of seeing the Countess Julia von Egloffstein, and of conversing with her pleasantly on various subjects.

(Sup.) Wednesday, April 6, 1825.

Goethe's advice has been followed, and a performance has taken place this evening, for the first time, in the great hall of the town-house, consisting of small things and fragments, which were in accordance with the confined space and the want of decorations. The little opera, *Das Hausgesinde* (The Domestic Servants), went quite as well as at the theatre. Then a favourite quartet, from the opera *Graf von Gleichen* (Count von Gleichen), by Eberwein, was received with approbation. Our first tenor, Herr Moltke, then sang a well-known song from *Die Zauberflöte*; and, after a pause, the grand finale to the first act of *Don Juan* came in with powerful effect, and nobly concluded this first substitute for an evening at the theatre.

(Sup.) Sunday, April 10, 1825.

Dined with Goethe. "I have the good news," said he, "that the Grand Duke has approved of our design for the new theatre, and that the foundation will be laid immediately.

"We had to contend with all sorts of obstacles; we are at last happily through them. We owe many thanks to the Privy Counsellor, Schweitzer; who stood true to our cause. The sketch is signed in the Grand Duke's handwriting, and is to undergo no further alteration. Rejoice, then; for you will obtain a very good theatre."

(Sup.) Thursday, April 14, 1825.

This evening at Goethe's. Since conversation upon the theatre and theatrical management was now the order of the day, I asked him upon what maxims he proceeded in the choice of a new member of the company.

"I can scarcely say," returned Goethe; "I had various modes of proceeding. If a striking reputation preceded the new actor, I let him act, and saw how he suited the others; whether his style disturbed our *ensemble*, or whether he would supply a deficiency. If, however, he was a young man who had never trodden a stage before, I first considered his personal qualities; whether he had about him anything attractive, and, above all things, whether he had control over himself. For an actor who possesses no self-possession, who cannot appear before a stranger in his most favourable light, has, generally speaking, little talent. His whole profession requires continual self-denial, and a continual existence in a foreign mask.

"If his appearance and his deportment pleased me, I made him read, in order to test the power and extent of his organ, as well as the capabilities of his mind. I gave him some sublime passage from a great poet, to see whether he was capable of feeling and expressing what was really great; then something passionate and wild, to prove his power. I then went to something marked by sense and smartness, something ironical and witty; to see how he treated such things, and whether he had sufficient freedom. Then I gave him something representing the pain of a wounded heart, the suffering of a great soul; that I might learn whether he could express pathos.

"If he satisfied me in all these, I had a hope of making him an important actor. If he appeared more capable in some particulars than in others, I remarked the line to which he was adapted. I also now knew his weak points, and, above all, endeavoured to work upon him so that he might strengthen and cultivate himself here. If I remarked faults of dialect, provincialisms, I urged him to lay them aside, and recommended to him social intercourse and friendly practice with some member of the stage who was entirely free from them. I then asked him whether he could dance and fence; and if this were not so, I would hand him over for some time to the dancing and fencing masters.

"If he were now sufficiently advanced to make his appearance, I gave him at first such parts as suited his individuality, and desired nothing but that he should represent himself. If he now appeared to me of too fiery a nature, I gave him phlegmatic characters; if too calm and tedious, I gave him fiery and hasty characters, that he might thus learn to lay aside himself, and assume foreign individuality."

The conversation turned upon the casting of plays, upon which Goethe made, among others, the following observations:

"It is a great error to think," said he, "that an indifferent piece may be played by indifferent actors. A second- or third-rate play can be incredibly improved by the employment of first-rate powers, and be made something really good. But if a second- or third-rate play be performed by second- or third-rate actors, no wonder if it is utterly ineffective.

"Second-rate actors are excellent in great plays. They have the same effect that the figures in half-shade have in a picture; they serve to show off those that have the full light."

(Sup.) Saturday, April 16, 1825.

Dined at Goethe's with D'Alton, whose acquaintance I made last summer at Bonn. D'Alton is quite after Goethe's own heart; there is also a very pleasant relation between them. In his own science he appears of great importance, so that Goethe esteems his observations and honours every word he utters. Moreover, D'Alton is, as a man, amiable and witty, while in eloquence and abundance of flowing thoughts few can equal him.

Goethe, who in his endeavours to investigate nature would willingly encompass the Great Whole, stands in a disadvantageous position in regard to every scientist of importance who has devoted a whole life to one special object and has mastered a kingdom of endless details. Goethe lives more in the contemplation of great universal laws: hence, always upon the track of some great synthesis, but (from the want of knowledge of single facts) lacking confirmation of his presentiments, he seizes upon and retains every connection with important scientists; for in them he finds what he himself wants. He will be eighty in a few years; but he is not tired of inquiries and experiments. In none of his tendencies has he come to a standstill; he is still learning and learning—a man endowed with perpetual, imperishable youth.

These reflections were awakened to-day, by his animated conversation with D'Alton. D'Alton talked about Rodentia, and the formation and modifications of their skeletons, and Goethe was unwearied in hearing new facts.

Wednesday, April 20, 1825.

Goethe showed me this evening a letter from a young student, who begs of him the plan for the second part of *Faust*, with the design of completing the work himself. In a straightforward, good-humoured, and candid tone, he freely sets forth his wishes and views; and at last, without reserve, utters his conviction that all other literary efforts of later years have been naught, but that in him a new literature is to bloom afresh. . . . I think I may observe that this presumptuousness, now so common in Germany, which audaciously strides over all the steps of gradual culture, affords little hope of future masterpieces.

"The misfortune in the state," said Goethe, "is, that nobody can enjoy life in peace, but that everybody must govern; and in art, that nobody will enjoy what has been produced, but everybody wants to reproduce on his own account. Again, nobody thinks to be furthered in his own way by a work of poetry, but everybody will do the same thing over again. There is, besides, no earnestness to approach the Whole, no willingness to do anything for the sake of the Whole; each one tries to make his own Self observable, and to exhibit it as much as possible to the world. People imitate the modern musical virtuosi, who do not select those pieces that give the audience pure musical enjoyment, so much as those in which they can gain admiration by their dexterity. Everywhere is the individual who wants to show off, nowhere honest effort to subserve the Whole. Hence a bungling mode of production is unconsciously acquired. As children, people make verses; and they fancy, as youths, they can do something—until, at last, manhood gives them insight into the excellence that exists, and then they look back in despair on the years they have wasted on a false and futile effort: though there are many that never attain a knowledge of what is perfect and of their own insufficiency, and go on doing things by halves to the end of their days.

"If all could early be made to feel how full the world is of excellence, and how much must be done to produce anything worthy of being placed beside what has already been done—of a hundred youths now poetizing, scarcely one would have courage, perseverance, and talent, to work quietly for the attainment of a similar mastery. Many young painters would never have taken their pencils in hand, if early enough they could have felt, known, and understood, what really produced a master like Raphael."

The conversation turned upon false tendencies in general, and Goethe continued:

"My tendency to painting was really a false one, for I had not natural talent from which anything of the sort could be developed. A certain sensibility to the surrounding landscapes was one of my qualities, consequently my first attempts were really promising. The journey to Italy destroyed this pleasure in practice. A broad survey took its place, but the talent of love was lost; and, as an artistic talent could neither technically nor æsthetically be developed, my efforts melted away into nothing.

"It is justly said," continued Goethe, "that the communal cultivation of all human powers is desirable and excellent. But the individual is not born for this; everyone must form himself as a particular being—seeking, however, to attain that general idea of which all mankind are constituents."[1]

I here thought of that passage in *Wilhelm Meister*, where it is likewise said that all men, taken together, are requisite to constitute humanity, and that we are only so far worthy of esteem as we know how to appreciate.

I thought, too, of the *Wanderjahre*, where Jarno advises each man to learn only one trade; and says that this is the time for one-sidedness, and that he is to be congratulated who understands this, and, in that spirit, works for himself and others.

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Culture is to be distinguished from practical activity. Thus it belongs to the cultivation of the poet that his eye should be practised for the apprehension of external objects. And if Goethe calls his practical tendency to painting a false one, it was still of use in cultivating him as a poet.

"The objectivity of my poetry," said he, "may be attributed to this great attention and discipline of the eye; and I ought highly to prize the knowledge I have attained in this way."

But we must take care not to place the limits of our culture too far off.

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[1] "Den Begriff zu erlangen suchen, was alle zusammen sind." The word "Begriff" (rendered not quite correctly "idea") is here used in the sense of the Hegelian school.—J. O.

"The investigators into nature," said Goethe, "are most in danger of this, because a general harmonious culture of the faculties is really required for the adequate observation of nature."

On the other hand, everybody should strive to guard himself against one-sidedness and narrow views with respect to the knowledge indispensable to his own department. A poet who writes for the stage must have a knowledge of the stage; that he may weigh the means at his command, and know generally what is to be done, and what is to be left alone: the opera-composer, in like manner, should have some insight into poetry; that he may know how to distinguish the bad from the good, and not apply his art to something impracticable.

"Carl Maria von Weber," said Goethe, "should not have composed *Euryanthe*. He should have seen at once that this was a bad material, of which nothing could be made. So much insight we have a right to expect of every composer, as belonging to his art."

Thus, too, the painter should be able to distinguish subjects: for it belongs to his department to know what he has to paint, and what to leave unpainted.

"But, when all is said," observed Goethe, "the greatest art is to limit and isolate oneself."

Accordingly, he has, while I have been with him, constantly endeavoured to guard me against all distractions, and to keep me to a single department. If I showed an inclination to penetrate the secrets of natural science, he always advised me to leave it alone, and to confine myself to poetry for the present. If I wished to read a book that he thought would not advance me in my present pursuits, he always advised me to refrain, saying it was of no practical use to me.

"I myself," said he one day, "have spent too much time on things that did not belong to my department. When I reflect what Lopez de Vega accomplished, the number of my poetical productions seems very small. I should have kept more to my own trade."

"If I had not busied myself so much with stones," said he, another time, "but had spent my time on something better, I might have won the finest ornament of diamonds."

For the same cause he esteems and praises his friend Meyer for having devoted his whole life exclusively to the study of art, and thus having obtained beyond a doubt the highest degree of penetration in his department.

"I also grew up with this tendency," said Goethe, "and passed almost half my life in the contemplation and study of works of art, but in a certain respect I am not on a par with Meyer. I therefore never venture to show him a new picture at once, but first see how far I can get on with it myself. When I think I am fully acquainted with its beauties and defects, I show it to Meyer; who sees far more sharply into the matter, and who in many respects gives new lights. Thus I am ever convinced anew how much is needed to be thoroughly great in any *one* thing. In Meyer lies an insight into art belonging to thousands of years."

[Eckermann here, in view of Goethe's own discursiveness, reminds us (as Goethe himself does elsewhere) of the all-round low state of German culture in Goethe's youth.]

(Sup.) Wednesday, April 27, 1825.

Towards the evening to Goethe, who had invited me to take a drive to the lower garden. "Before we go," said he, "I will give you a letter from Zelter, received yesterday, wherein he touches upon the affairs of our theatre."

"'That you are not the man,' he writes, amongst other things, 'to found a drama for the people of Weimar, I could have seen long ago. He that makes himself green, the goats will eat. Other high folks should take this into consideration, who would cork wine during its fermentation.

"'Friends, we have lived to see it; yes, lived to see it.'"

Goethe looked at me, and we laughed. "Zelter is a capital fellow," said he; "but sometimes he does not quite understand me, and puts a false construction on my words.

"I have devoted my whole life to the people and their improvement, and why should I not also found a drama? But here in Weimar, in this small residence, which, as people jokingly say, has ten thousand poets and a few inhabitants, how can we talk about the people, to say nothing of a theatre for the people? Weimar will doubtless become, at some time, a great city; but we must wait some centuries before the people of Weimar will form a mass sufficient to found and support a drama."

The horses were now put to, and we drove to the lower garden. The evening was calm and mild, rather sultry; and large clouds appeared gathering in tempestuous masses. We walked up and down the dry gravel path. I listened to the notes of the blackbird and thrush, which, upon the tops of the still leafless ash-trees, beyond the Ilm, sang against the gathering tempest.

Goethe cast his glances around: now towards the clouds; now upon the verdure bursting forth everywhere—on the sides of the path and on the meadows, as well as on the bushes and hedges. "A warm thunder-shower, which the evening promises," said he, "and spring will reappear in all her splendour and abundance."

The clouds became more threatening, a low peal of thunder was heard, some drops of rain also fell, and Goethe thought it advisable to drive back into the town. "If you have no engagement," said he, as we alighted at his dwelling, "go upstairs, and spend an hour or so with me." This I did.

Zelter's letter still lay upon the table. "It is strange, very strange," said Goethe, "how easily one falls into a false position with respect to public opinion. I do not know that I ever joined in any way against the people; but it is now settled, once for all, that I am no friend to the people. I am, indeed, no friend to the revolutionary mob: whose object is robbery, murder, and destruction; and who, behind the mask of public welfare, have their eyes only upon the meanest egotistical aims. I am no friend to such people, any more than I am a friend of a Louis XV. I hate every violent overthrow, because as much good is destroyed as is gained by it. I hate those who achieve it, as well as those who give cause for it. But am I therefore no friend to the people? Does any right-minded man think otherwise?

"You know how greatly I rejoice at every improvement, of which the future gives us some prospect. But, as I said, all violent transitions are revolting to my mind, for they are not conformable to nature.

"I am a friend to plants; I love the rose, as the most perfect flower which our German nature can produce; but I am not fool enough to desire that my garden should produce them now, at the end of April. I am satisfied if I now find the first green leaves, satisfied if I see how one leaf after another is formed upon the stem, from week to week; I am pleased when in May I perceive the buds, and am happy when at last in June the rose itself appears in all its splendour and fragrance. If anybody cannot wait, let him go to the hot-houses.[1]

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[1] In the same spirit, in conversation with Soret (Dec. 20, 1830), Goethe laid down the comfortable principle: "We leave some evils untouched that something may remain upon which mankind can further develop their powers."

"It is further said that I am a servant, a slave to princes; as if that were saying anything. Do I then serve a tyrant—a despot? Do I serve one who lives at the cost of the people, only for his own pleasures? Such princes and such times lie, God be praised, far behind us. I have been intimately connected with the Grand Duke for half a century, and during half a century have striven and worked with him; but I should lie if I were to say that I have known a single day in which the Grand Duke has not thought of doing something tending to benefit the land and to improve the condition of people. What has he from his princely station, but toil and trouble? Is his dwelling, his apparel, or his table better appointed than that of any wealthy private man? Only go into our seaport towns, and you will find the kitchen and cellar of any considerable merchant better appointed than his.

"This autumn," continued Goethe, "we are going to celebrate the day when the Grand Duke will have governed for fifty years. But this government of his—what has it been but a servitude to the welfare of his people? If then I must perforce be the slave of a prince, it is at least my consolation that I am still only the slave of one who is himself a slave to the common weal."

(Sup.) Friday, April 29, 1825.

The building of the new theatre had advanced very rapidly; the foundation walls had already risen on every side, and gave promise of a very beautiful building.

But to-day, on going to the site, I saw to my dismay that the work was discontinued; and I heard it reported that another party, opposed to Goethe and Coudray's plan, had at last triumphed; that Coudray had retired from the direction of the building, and that another architect was going to finish it after a new design, altering the foundation already laid.

I was deeply grieved; for I had rejoiced with many others at the prospect of seeing arise in Weimar a theatre executed according to Goethe's practical view and cultivated taste. But I also grieved for Goethe and Coudray, who must both feel hurt.

(Sup.) Sunday, May 1, 1825.

Dined with Goethe. It may be supposed that the alteration in the building of the theatre was the first subject we talked upon. I had, as I said, feared that this most unexpected measure would deeply wound Goethe's feelings; but there was no sign of it. I found him in the mildest and most serene frame of mind, raised above all sensitive littleness.

"They have," said he, "assailed the Grand Duke on the side of expenditure and the great saving of expense which will be effected by the change of plan for the building, and they have succeeded. I am quite content. A new theatre is, in the end, only a new funeral pile which some accident will sooner or later set on fire. I console myself with this. Besides, a trifle more or less is not worth mentioning. You will have a very tolerable house, if not exactly such a one as I wished and imagined. You will go to it, and I shall go to it too, and in the end all will turn out well enough.

"The Grand Duke," said Goethe, "disclosed to me his opinion, that a theatre need not be of architectural magnificence, which could not be contradicted. He further said that it was nothing but a house for the purpose of getting money. This view appears, at first sight, rather material; but, rightly considered, it is not without a higher purport. For if a theatre is not only to pay its expenses, but is besides to make and save money, everything about it must be excellent. It must have the best management at its head; the actors must be of the best; and good pieces must continually be performed, that the attractive power required to draw a full house every evening may never cease. But that is saying a great deal in a few words—almost what is impossible."

"The Grand Duke's view," said I, "of making the theatre gain money, appears to be very practical, since it implies a necessity of remaining continually on a summit of excellence."

"Even Shakespeare and Molière," returned Goethe, "had no other view. Both of them wished, above all things, to make money by their theatres. In order to attain this, their principal aim, they strove that everything should be as good as possible, and that besides good old plays there should be some clever novelty to please and attract. The prohibition of *Tartuffe* was a thunderbolt to Molière; but not so much for the poet as for the director Molière, who had to consider the welfare of an important troupe and to find bread for himself and his actors.

"Nothing," continued Goethe, "is more dangerous to the well-being of a theatre than when the director is so placed that a greater or less receipt at the treasury does not affect him personally, and he can live on in careless security—knowing that, however the receipts at the treasury may fail in the course of the year, at the end of that time he will be able to indemnify himself from another source. It is a property of human nature soon to relax, when not impelled by personal advantage or disadvantage. Now, it is not to be expected that a theatre in such a town as Weimar should support itself, and that no contribution from the Prince's treasury should be necessary. Still, everything has its limits; and a thousand dollars yearly, more or less, is no trifling matter, particularly as diminished receipts and deteriorations are dangers natural to a theatre—so that there is a loss not only of money, but also of honour.

"If I were the Grand Duke, I would in future, on any change in the management, once for all appoint a fixed sum for an annual contribution. I would strike the average of the contributions during the last ten years; and, according to that, I would settle a sum sufficient to be regarded as a proper support. With this sum the house must be kept. But then I would go a step further, and say that if the director and his *Regisseurs* contrived by means of judicious and energetic management to have an overplus in the treasury at the end of the year, this overplus should be shared as a remuneration by the director, the *Regisseurs*, and the principal members of the company. Then you would see what activity there would be, and how out of its inevitably overtaking drowsiness the establishment would wake up.

"Our theatrical laws," continued Goethe, "contain various penalties; but there is no single law for the encouragement and reward of distinguished merit. This is a great defect. For if, with every failure, I have a prospect of a deduction from my salary, I should also have the prospect of a reward whenever I do more than can be properly expected of me. And it is by everybody's doing more than can be hoped or expected of him, that a theatre rises."

Frau von Goethe and Fräulein Ulrica now entered, both gracefully clothed in summer attire on account of the beautiful weather. During dinner we spoke about various parties of pleasure during the past week, and about similar plans for the following one.

"If we continue to have fine evenings," said Frau von Goethe, "I shall give a tea-party in the park, where we can listen to the song of the nightingale. What do you say, dear father?"

"That would be very pleasant," returned Goethe. "And you, Eckermann," said Frau von Goethe, "how do you feel disposed? May you be invited?" "But, Ottilia," rejoined Fräulein Ulrica, "how can you invite the doctor? He will not come; and if he does come, he sits as if upon thorns, anybody can see that his mind is elsewhere and that the sooner he is gone the better he would like it." "To speak the plain truth," returned I, "I would certainly rather ramble about the fields with Doolan. Tea, tea-parties, and tea-conversation, are so contrary to my nature, that I feel uncomfortable even when I think of them." "But, Eckermann," said Frau von Goethe, "at a tea-party in the park, you are in the open air, and quite in your element." "On the contrary," said I, "when I am so near Nature, that I scent all her fragrance, and yet cannot thoroughly enjoy it, it is as unendurable as it would be to a duck to be brought near to the water and yet prevented from plunging in." "You might say, too," remarked Goethe, laughing, "that you would feel like a horse, who, on raising his head in the stable, sees other horses running wild upon an extensive plain. He scents the delights and freedom of fresh Nature, but cannot partake of them. Let Eckermann alone; he is as he is, you cannot alter him. But tell me, my good friend, how do you employ yourself with that Doolan of yours, in the open fields, these long fine afternoons?" "We look out for some retired grove," said I, "and shoot with bows and arrows."

[Here Eckermann takes the conversational lead, and tells how he bought a model arrow for a franc in 1814 when in Flanders (where archery is practised at all the public-houses), intending to introduce the sport into Germany. Goethe warns him that it will be a hard and long job, replacing the Philistine amusements of the skittle-ground. Eckermann praises the gracefulness of archery. Goethe says it would be well suited to German gymnastic institutions, and might be made popular in twenty years—by training the young generation to it: several gymnastic societies combining, and importing a teacher from Brabant or sending one of their own teachers thither. Goethe adds he was sorry when politics crept into German gymnastic exercises and they had to be restrained: German youths especially need them—especially the students, destitute of physical equilibrium.

Eckermann tells how he made arrows—trying poplar, pine, birch, and finally linden wood, for the shaft; and cutting a piece from the kernel of a horn, for the tip. The feathering needed skill: as Goethe surmised, it is done with glue—a special kind, the best being isinglass steeped in water for some hours and then dissolved with spirit into a jelly over a gentle charcoal fire. Suitable feathers are the red ones from the wings of a peacock, the large feathers of a turkey-cock, or (best of all) wing-feathers of eagle or bustard.

Goethe, surprised at his friend's "lively" tendencies, inquires about the bow. Eckermann confesses to bungling it at first: trying young ash, which proved of too coarse a grain at the centre; then, on advice to take a stem strong enough to split straight (to avoid the cutting of twisted fibres), doing so, and finding the ash of

Nohra—famous for cart-fittings—best, and that of Ettersberg about the worst. Wood growing on the north side of a declivity is best—its fibres growing straighter in the effort to get into the sunlight. And the wood on the north side of the stem is superior to that on the south side, being closer; so that cartwrights choose it, calling it the "winter side." A bow made from the split north side of an ash-stem served for a time, but then began to weaken and curve; so he tried walnut (which was better), and at last the fine-leafed maple termed *Masholder*. Goethe knows the wood in hedges, but objects that the young stems are knotty. Eckermann tells him that in the mature wood the knots are easily removable or (if the tree be growing in a thicket) disappear. A stem two to three inches in diameter when knots are removed,[1] if allowed to go on growing will in from fifty to eighty years have six inches of sound wood free from knots, encasing the knotty interior. From this wood a plank is to be sawn, and a piece taken from a part of the plank near the bark is most suitable for a bow. The *Masholder* is to be sawn, for it is so close-grained and interwoven that it will not split straight.

Goethe commends his friend's practical way of getting knowledge, and asks which form is best: the straight bow of the Scots, or the bow curved at the ends. Eckermann believes curving the ends backward strengthens the bow. The curve is made by keeping the end for an hour in six inches of boiling water, and then screwing it into a mould of the required curve—formed by two blocks—and leaving it a day and a night.]

"What do you think?" said Goethe, with a mysterious laugh. "I believe I have something for you which will not be unacceptable. Suppose we went down together, and I were to put a genuine Baschkir bow [2] in your hands."

"A Baschkir bow!" exclaimed I, full of animation, "and a genuine one?"

"Yes, mad fellow, a genuine one," said Goethe. "Come along." We went down into the garden. Goethe opened the under chamber of a small outhouse, the tables and walls of which appeared crammed with rarities and curiosities of every description. I cast only a transient glance at these treasures; my eyes sought the bow. "Here it is," said Goethe, as he took it from a corner. "I see it is in the same condition as when it was presented to me in the year 1814, by a Baschkir chief. Now, what do you say?"

I was delighted to hold the precious weapon in my hands. It appeared quite uninjured, and even the string appeared perfectly serviceable. I tried it in my hands, and found that it was still tolerably elastic. "It is a good bow," said I. "The form especially pleases me, and for the future it shall serve me as a model."

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[1] *Quære*, the external protuberances of the knots.

[2] The Baschkiren are a Tatar race subject to Russia.—J. O.

"Of what wood is it made, do you think?"

"It is, as you see, so covered with birch bark," replied I, "that very little of the wood is visible, and only the curved ends remain exposed. Even these are so embrowned by time that one cannot well distinguish what the wood is. At the first glance, it looks like young oak, and then again like nut-tree. I think that it is nut-tree, or a wood that resembles it. Maple or *Masholder* it is not. It is a wood of coarser fibre; besides, I observe signs of its having been split (*geschlachtet*)."

"Suppose you were to try it now," said Goethe. "Here you have an arrow. But be cautious with the iron point, it may be poisoned."

We went again into the garden, and I bent the bow. "Now, where will you shoot?" said Goethe. "Into the air at first, I think," said I. "Go on, then," said Goethe. I shot up towards the sunny clouds in the blue sky. The arrow supported itself well, then turned round, came whizzing downwards, and stuck into the ground. "Now let me try," said Goethe. I gave him the bow, and fetched the arrow.

Goethe placed the notch of the arrow upon the string, and held the bow right, but was some time before he could manage it properly. He now aimed upwards, and drew the string. There he stood like an Apollo, with imperishable youth of soul, although old in body. The arrow only attained a very moderate height, and then fell to the ground. I ran and fetched the arrow. "Once more," said Goethe. He now took aim along the gravel path of the garden. The arrow supported itself about thirty paces tolerably well, then fell, and whizzed along upon the ground. Goethe pleased me beyond measure, by thus shooting with the bow and arrow. I thought of the verses:

> Does old age leave me in the lurch?
> Am I again a child?

I brought him back the arrow. He begged me to shoot once in a horizontal direction, and gave me for mark a spot in the window-shutter of his workroom. I shot. The arrow was not far from the mark; but penetrated so deep into the soft wood that I could not get it out again. "Let it stick there," said Goethe, "it shall serve me for some days as a remembrance of our sport."

We walked up and down the garden, enjoying the fine weather; we then sat upon a bench with our backs against the young leaves of a thick hedge. We spoke about the bow of Ulysses, about the heroes of Homer, then about the Greek tragic poets, and lastly about the widely diffused opinion that Euripides caused the decline of the Greek drama. Goethe was by no means of this opinion.

"Altogether," said he, "I am opposed to the view that any single man can cause the decline of an art. Much, not easy to set forth, must co-operate. The decline of the tragic art of the Greeks could no more have been caused by Euripides than could that of sculpture by any great sculptor who lived in the time of Phidias but was inferior to him. For when an epoch is great it proceeds in the path of improvement, and an inferior production is without results. But what a great epoch was the time of Euripides! It was the time, not of a retrograde, but of a progressive taste. Sculpture had not yet reached its highest point, and painting was still in its infancy.

"If the pieces of Euripides, compared to those of Sophocles, had great faults, it was not necessary that succeeding poets should imitate these faults and be spoilt by them. But if they had great merits, so that some of them were even preferable to plays of Sophocles, why did not succeeding poets strive to imitate their merits; and why did they not thus become at least as great as Euripides himself?

"But if, after the three celebrated tragic poets, there appeared no equally great fourth, fifth, or sixth—this is, indeed, a matter difficult to explain; nevertheless, we may have our own conjectures, and approach the truth in some degree.

"Man is a simple being. And however rich, varied, and unfathomable he may be, the cycle of his situations is soon run through.

"If the same circumstances had occurred as with us poor Germans—for whom Lessing has written two or three, I myself three or four, and Schiller five or six passable plays—there might easily have been room for a fourth, fifth, and sixth tragic poet.

"But with the Greeks and the abundance of their productions—for each of the three great poets has written a hundred or nearly a hundred pieces; and the tragical subjects of Homer, and the heroic traditions, were some of them treated three or four times—with such abundance of existing works, I say, it can well be imagined that by degrees subjects were exhausted, and that any poet who followed the three great ones would be puzzled how to proceed.

"For what purpose should he write? Was there not enough for a time? And were not the productions of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, of that kind and of that depth that they might be heard again and again without being esteemed trite or put aside? Even the few noble fragments that have come down to us are so comprehensive and of such deep significance, that we poor Europeans have already busied ourselves with them for centuries and shall find nutriment and work in them for centuries still."

Thursday, May 12, 1825.

Goethe spoke with much enthusiasm of Menander. "I know nobody, after Sophocles," said he, "whom I love so well. He is thoroughly pure, noble, great, and cheerful; and his grace is beyond rivalry. It is certainly to be lamented that we possess so little of him; but that little is invaluable and highly instructive to gifted men.

"The great point is, that he from whom we would learn should be congenial to our nature. Now, Calderon, for instance, great as he is, and much as I admire him, has exerted no influence over me for good or for ill. But he would have been dangerous to Schiller—he would have led him astray; and hence it is fortunate that Calderon was not generally known in Germany till after Schiller's death. Calderon is infinitely great in the technical and theatrical—Schiller, on the contrary, far more sound, earnest, and great, in his intention; and it would have been a pity if he had lost any of these virtues without after all attaining the greatness of Calderon in other respects.

"Molière," said Goethe, "is so great that he astonishes anew every time he is read. He is a man by himself—his pieces border on tragedy; they are apprehensive; and nobody has the courage to imitate them. His *Miser*, where the vice destroys all the natural piety between father and son, is especially great, and in a high sense tragic. But when, in a German paraphrase, the son is changed into a relation, the whole is weakened and loses its significance. They feared to show the vice in its true nature as he did; but what is tragic there, or indeed anywhere, except what is intolerable?

"I read some pieces of Molière's every year—just as, from time to time, I contemplate the engravings after the great Italian masters. For we little men are not able to retain the greatness of such things within ourselves; we must therefore return to them from time to time, and renew our impressions.

"People are always talking about originality; but what do they mean? As soon as we are born, the world begins to work upon us, and this goes on to the end. What can we call our own except energy, strength, and will? If I could give an account of all that I owe to great predecessors and contemporaries, there would be but a small balance in my favour.

"However, the time of life in which we are subjected to a new and important personal influence is by no means a matter of indifference. That Lessing, Winckelmann, and Kant were older than I, and that the first two acted upon my youth, the last on my advanced age—this circumstance was for me very important. Again, that Schiller was so much younger than I, and engaged in his freshest strivings just as I began to be weary of the world—just, too, as the brothers von Humboldt and Schlegel were beginning their career under my eye—was of the greatest importance. I derived from it unspeakable advantages."

After these remarks respecting the influence important persons had had upon him, the conversation turned on the influence he had exerted over others; and I mentioned Bürger, whose case appeared to me problematical, since his purely natural tendency showed no trace of influence on the part of Goethe.

"Bürger," said Goethe, "had an affinity to me as a talent; but the tree of his moral culture had its root in a wholly different soil, and took a wholly different direction. Each man proceeds as he has begun, in the ascending line of his culture. A man who in his thirtieth year could write such a poem as *Frau Schnips*, had obviously taken a path that deviated a little from mine. He had also, by his really great talents, won for himself a public which he perfectly satisfied; and he had no need for troubling himself about a contemporary who did not affect him at all.

"Everywhere, we learn only from those whom we love. There is a favourable disposition towards me in the young talents now growing up, but I very rarely found it among my contemporaries. Nay, I can scarcely name one man of any weight who was perfectly satisfied with me. Even with *Werther* people found so much fault that, if I had erased every passage that was censured, scarcely a line of the whole book would have been left. However, all the censure did me no harm; for these subjective judgments of individuals, important as they may be, are at least rectified by the masses. He who does not expect a million readers should not write a line.

"For twenty years the public has been disputing which is the greater, Schiller or I; and it ought to be glad that it has got a couple of fellows about whom it *can* dispute."

(Sup.) Monday, June 5, 1825.[1]

Goethe related to me that Preller had been with him, and had taken leave, as he is going to spend some years in Italy.

"As a parting word," said Goethe, "I counselled him not to allow himself to be distracted, but to confine himself particularly to Poussin and Claude Lorraine, and above all to study the works of these two great men—that he might plainly see how they regarded Nature, and used her for the expression of their artistic views and feelings.

"Preller is an important talent, and I have no fear for him. He appears to me, besides, to be very earnest. I am almost certain he will rather incline to Poussin than to Claude Lorraine; still, I have particularly recommended him to study the latter—and not without reason; for it is with the cultivation of an artist as with the cultivation of every other talent. Our strong points, to a certain extent, develop themselves; but those germs of our nature which are not in daily exercise, and are therefore less powerful, need particular care, in order that they also may become strong. So may a young singer, as I have often said, possess certain natural tones that leave nothing to be desired; while other tones in his voice may be found less strong, clear, and full. But even these he must by constant exercise seek to bring to equal perfection.

"I am certain Preller will one day succeed admirably in the solemn, the grand, and perhaps also the wild. Whether he will be equally happy in the cheerful, the graceful, and the lovely, is another question; therefore have I especially recommended to him Claude Lorraine, that by study he may acquire what does not lie in the actual tendency of his nature.

"There is one thing more to which I called his attention. I have seen many of his studies from nature: they were excellent, and executed with great energy and life; but they were all isolated objects, of which little can afterwards be made when it comes to individual inventions. I have advised him never in future to delineate an isolated object—such as single trees, single heaps of stones, or single cottages—but always to add a background and some surrounding objects.

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[1] In the original this is dated 1826, but from its position in the volume it may be conjectured that this is a misprint.—J. O.

"And for the following reasons. In nature we never see anything isolated; everything is in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it, and over it. A single object may strike us as particularly picturesque: it is not, however, the object alone which produces this effect; it is the connection in which we see it, with that which is beside, behind, and above it—all of which contribute to that effect. Thus during a walk I may see an oak, the picturesque effect of which surprises me. But if I represent it alone, it will perhaps no longer appear as it did, for want of that which contributed to and enhanced the picturesque effect in nature. Thus, too, a wood may appear beautiful through the influence of one particular sky, one particular light, and one particular situation of the sun; but, if I omit all these in my drawing, it will perhaps appear without force, and as something indifferent.

"Further; there is in nature nothing beautiful which is not produced (*motivirt*) as *true* in conformity with the laws of nature. In order that that truth of nature may also appear true in the picture, it must be accounted for by the introduction of the influential circumstances.

"I find by a brook well-formed stones, the parts of which exposed to the air are picturesquely covered with green moss. Now it is not alone moisture which has caused this formation; but perhaps also a northerly aspect, or the shade of trees and bushes, have co-operated. If I omit these influential causes in my picture, it will be without truth, and without the proper convincing power.

"Thus, the situation of a tree, the kind of soil beneath it, and other trees behind and beside it, have a great influence on its formation. An oak standing exposed to the wind on the western summit of a rocky hill will acquire a form quite different from that of one growing in the moist ground of a sheltered valley. Both may be beautiful in their kind; but they will have a very different character, and can therefore, in an artistically conceived landscape, only be used for such a situation as they occupied in nature. So the delineation of surrounding objects, by which any particular situation is expressed, is of high importance to the artist. On the other hand, it would be foolish to attempt to represent prosaic accidents that have had as little influence upon the form of the principal objects as upon its picturesque effect for the moment.

"I have imparted the substance of all these little hints to Preller, and I am certain that they will take root and thrive in him—as a born genius."

Saturday, June 11, 1825.

To-day Goethe talked much at dinner about Major Parry's book on Lord Byron. He gave it unqualified praise; remarking that Lord Byron in this account appeared a far more complete character, and far more clear as to himself and his views, than in anything else written about him.

"Major Parry," continued Goethe, "must be an elevated—a noble person; so fully to have conceived, and so perfectly to have described his friend. One passage in his book has pleased me particularly; it is worthy of an old Greek—of a Plutarch. 'The noble lord,' says Parry, 'was destitute of all those virtues which adorn the bourgeois class, and which he was prevented from attaining by his birth, education, and mode of life. Now all his unfavourable judges are from the middle class; and these censoriously pity him, because they miss in him that which they have reason to prize in themselves. The good folks do not reflect that for his own high station he possessed virtues of which they can form no conception.' How do you like that?" said Goethe: "we do not hear so good a thing every day."

"I am glad," said I, "to see publicly expressed an opinion by which all the puny censors and detractors of a man higher than themselves must be at once disabled and overthrown."

We then discussed subjects of universal history in relation to poetry, and how far the history of one nation may be more favourable to the poet than that of another.

"The poet," said Goethe, "should seize the Particular; and he should, if there be anything sound in it, thus represent the Universal. English history is excellent for poetry; because it is something genuine, healthy, and therefore universal, which repeats itself over and over again. French history, on the contrary, is not for poetry; as it represents an era that cannot come again. The literature of the French, so far as it is founded on that era, stands as something of merely particular interest, which must grow old with time.

"The present era of French literature," said Goethe afterwards, "cannot be judged fairly. The German influence causes a great fermentation there, and we probably shall not know the result for twenty years."

We then talked of the æsthetic writers, who labour to express the nature of poetry and the poet in abstract definitions, without arriving at any clear result.

"What need of much definition?" said Goethe. "Lively feeling of situations, and power to express them, make the poet."

Wednesday, October 12, 1825.

I found Goethe in a very elevated mood this evening. We talked about the state of the newest literature, when Goethe expressed himself as follows:

"Deficiency of character in individual investigators and writers is the source of all the evils of our newest literature.

"In criticism especially, this defect produces mischief to the world; for it either diffuses the false instead of the true, or by a pitiful truth deprives us of something great that would be better.

"Till lately, the world believed in the heroism of a Lucretia—of a Mucius Scævola—and suffered itself by this belief to be warmed and inspired. But now comes your historical criticism, and says that those persons never lived, but are to be regarded as fables and fictions divined by the great mind of the Romans. What are we to do with so pitiful a truth? If the Romans were great enough to invent such stories, we should at least be great enough to believe them.

"Till lately, I was always pleased with a great fact in the thirteenth century, when the Emperor Frederick the Second was at variance with the Pope, and the north of Germany was open to all sorts of hostile attacks. Asiatic hordes had actually penetrated as far as Silesia, when the Duke of Liegnitz terrified them by one great defeat. They then turned to Moravia, but were there defeated by Count Sternberg. These valiant men had on this account been living in my heart as the great saviours of the German nation. But now comes historical criticism, and says that these heroes sacrificed themselves quite uselessly, as the Asiatic army was already recalled and would have returned of its own accord. Thus is a great national fact crippled and destroyed, which seems to me most abominable." [1]

Goethe spoke of another class of seekers and literary men.

"I could never," said he, "have known so well how paltry men are, and how little they care for really high aims, if I had not tested them by my scientific researches. Thus I saw that most men only care for science so far as they get a living by it, and that they worship even error when it affords them a subsistence.

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[1] It would be interesting to know whether some humour of Goethe was here (and elsewhere) lost upon the more solemn Eckermann.

"In *belles lettres* it is no better. There, too, high aims, and genuine love for the true and sound and for their diffusion, are very rare phenomena. One man cherishes and tolerates another, because he is by him cherished and tolerated in return. True greatness is hateful to them; they would fain drive it from the world, so that only such as they might be of importance in it. Such are the masses; and the prominent individuals are no better.

"——'s great talents and world-embracing learning might have done much for his country. But his want of character has deprived the world of such great results, and himself of the esteem of the country.

"We want a man like Lessing. For how was he great, except in character—in firmness? There are many men as clever and as cultivated, but where is such character?

"Many are full of esprit and knowledge, but they are also full of vanity; and, that they may shine as wits before the short-sighted multitude, they have no shame or delicacy—nothing is sacred to them. Madame de Genlis was therefore perfectly right when she declaimed against the freedoms and profanities of Voltaire. Clever as they all may be, the world has derived no profit from them; they afford a foundation for nothing. Nay, they have been of the greatest injury; since they have confused men, and robbed them of their needful support.

"After all, what do we know, and how far can we go with all our wit? Man is born, not to solve the problems of the universe, but to find out where the problem applies, and then to restrain himself within the limits of the comprehensible. His faculties are not sufficient to measure the actions of the universe; and an attempt to explain the outer world by reason is, with his narrow view, vain. The reason of man and the reason of the Deity are two very different things.

"If we grant freedom to man, there is an end to the omniscience of God; for if the Divinity knows how I shall act, I must act so perforce. I give this merely as a sign how little we know, and to show that it is not good to meddle with divine mysteries.

"Moreover, we should only utter higher maxims so far as they can benefit the world. The rest we should keep within ourselves, and they will diffuse over our actions a lustre like the mild radiance of a hidden sun."

Sunday, December 25, 1825.

I went to Goethe this evening at six. I found him alone, and passed with him some delightful hours.

"My mind," said he, "has of late been burdened. So much good has been flowing in to me on all sides, that the mere ceremony of returning thanks has prevented me from having any practical life. The privileges respecting the publication of my works have been gradually coming in from the different courts; and, as the position was different in each case, each required a different answer. Then came the proposals of innumerable booksellers, which also had to be considered, acted upon, and answered. Then my Jubilee has brought me such thousandfold attentions that I have not yet got through my letters of acknowledgment. I cannot be content with hollow generalities, but wish to say something appropriate to everyone. Now I am gradually becoming free, and feel again disposed for conversation.

"I have of late made an observation, which I will impart to you.

"Everything we do has a result. But that which is right and prudent does not always lead to good, nor the contrary to what is bad; frequently the reverse takes place. Some time since, I made a mistake in one of these transactions with booksellers, and was sorry that I had done so. But now circumstances have so altered, that, if I had not made that very mistake, I should have made a greater one. Such instances occur frequently in life; and hence we see men of the world, who know this, going to work with great freedom and boldness."

This remark was new to me. I then turned the conversation to some of his works, and we came to the elegy *Alexis and Dora*.

"In this poem," said Goethe, "people have blamed the strong passionate conclusion, and would have liked the elegy to end gently and peacefully without that outbreak of jealousy; but I could not see that they were right. Jealousy is so manifestly an ingredient of the affair that the poem would be incomplete if it were not introduced. I myself knew a young man who, in the midst of his impassioned love for an easily-won maiden, cried out, 'But would she not act to another as she has acted to me?'"

I agreed; and then mentioned the peculiar situations in this elegy, where, with so few strokes and in so narrow a space, all is so well delineated that we think we see the whole life and domestic environment of the persons engaged in the action. "What you have described," said I, "appears as true as if you had worked from actual experience."

"I am glad it seems so to you," said Goethe. "There are, however, few men who have imagination for the truth of reality; most prefer strange countries and circumstances, of which they know nothing, and by which their imagination may be cultivated wondrously.

"Then there are others who cling altogether to reality, and, as they wholly lack the poetic spirit, are too severe in their requirements. For instance, in this elegy, some would have had me give Alexis a servant to carry his bundle—never thinking that everything poetic and idyllic in the situation would thus have been destroyed."

From *Alexis and Dora*, the conversation then turned to *Wilhelm Meister*. "There are odd critics in this world," said Goethe; "they blamed me for letting the hero of this novel live so much in bad company. But by considering this so-called bad company as a vase, into which I could put everything I had to say about good society, I gained a poetical frame, and a varied one into the bargain. Had I, on the contrary, delineated good society by the so-called good society, nobody would have read the book.

"In the seeming trivialities of *Wilhelm Meister*, there is always something higher at bottom; and nothing is required but eyes and knowledge of the world, and power of comprehension, to perceive the great in the small. For those who are without such qualities, let it suffice to receive the picture of life as real life."

Goethe then showed me a very interesting English work, which illustrated all Shakespeare in copper plates. Each page embraced, in six small designs, one piece with some verses written beneath; so that the leading idea, and the most important situations of each work, were brought before the eyes. All these immortal tragedies and comedies thus passed before the mind like processions of masks.

"It is even terrifying," said Goethe, "to look through these little pictures. Thus are we first made to feel the infinite wealth and grandeur of Shakespeare. There is no *motif* in human life which he has not exhibited and expressed! And all with what ease and freedom!

"But we cannot talk about Shakespeare; everything is inadequate. I have touched upon the subject in my *Wilhelm Meister*, but that is not saying much. He is not a theatrical poet; he never thought of the stage; it was far too narrow for his great mind; nay, the whole visible world was too narrow.

"He is even too rich and too powerful. A productive *nature* [1] ought not to read more than one of his dramas in a year, if it would not be wrecked entirely. I did well to get rid of him by writing *Goetz* and *Egmont* [2]; and Byron did well by not having too much respect and admiration for him, but going his own way. How many excellent Germans have been ruined by him and Calderon!

"Shakespeare gives us golden apples in silver dishes. We get, indeed, the silver dishes by studying his works; but, unfortunately, we have only potatoes to put into them."

I laughed.

Goethe then read me a letter from Zelter, describing a representation of *Macbeth* at Berlin, where the music could not keep pace with the grand spirit and character of the piece—as Zelter set forth by various intimations. By Goethe's reading, the letter gained its full effect, and he often paused to admire with me the point of some single passage.

"*Macbeth*," said Goethe, "is Shakespeare's best acting play, the one in which he shows most understanding with respect to the stage. But would you see his mind unfettered, read *Troilus and Cressida*, where he treats the materials of the *Iliad* in his own fashion."

The conversation turned upon Byron—the disadvantage to which he appears when placed beside the innocent cheerfulness of Shakespeare, and the frequent and generally not unjust blame that he drew upon himself by his manifold works of negation.

"If Lord Byron," said Goethe, "had had an opportunity of working off all the opposition in his character by a number of strong parliamentary speeches, he would have been much more pure as a poet. But, as he scarcely ever spoke in parliament, he kept within himself all his feelings against his nation; and to free himself from them he had no other means than poetry. I could call a great part of Byron's works of negation 'suppressed parliamentary speeches.'"

We then mentioned one of our most modern German poets, who had lately gained a great name and whose negative tendency was likewise disapproved. "We cannot deny," said Goethe, "that he has many brilliant qualities, but he is wanting in—*love*. He loves his readers and his fellow-poets as little as he loves himself, and thus we may apply to him the maxim of the apostle—'Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love (charity), I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' I have lately read the poems of ——, and cannot deny his great talent. But, as I said, he is deficient in *love*, and thus he will never produce the effect which he ought. He will be feared, and will be the idol of those who would like to be as negative as himself but have not his talent."

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[1] Vide p. 75, where a remark is made on the word *nature*, as applied to a person.—J. O.

[2] These plays were intended to be in the Shakespearian style; and Goethe means that by writing them he freed himself from Shakespeare, just as by writing *Werther* he freed himself from thoughts of suicide.—J. O.

1826

Sunday evening, January 29, 1826.

The most celebrated German improvisatore, Dr. Wolff of Hamburg, has been here several days, and has already given public proof of his rare talent. On Friday evening he gave a brilliant display to a large audience, in the presence of the court of Weimar. The same evening he received from Goethe an invitation to come to him next day at noon.

I talked with him yesterday evening, after he had improvised before Goethe. He was much delighted, and declared that this hour would make an epoch in his life; for Goethe, by a few words, had opened to him a wholly new path, and, when he had found fault with him, had hit the right nail on the head.

This evening, when I was at Goethe's, the conversation turned immediately on Wolff. "Dr. Wolff is very happy," said I, "that your excellency has given him good counsel."

"I was perfectly frank with him," said Goethe; "and if my words have made an impression on him and incited him, that is a very good sign. He is a decided talent without doubt, but he has the general sickness of the present day—subjectivity—and of that I would fain heal him. I gave him a task to try him: 'Describe to me,' said I, 'your return to Hamburg.' He was ready at once, and began immediately to speak in melodious verses. I could not but admire him, yet I could not praise him. It was not a return to Hamburg that he described, but merely the emotions on the return of a son to his parents, relations, and friends; and his poem would have served just as well for a return to Merseburg or Jena, as for a return to Hamburg. Yet what a remarkable, peculiar city is Hamburg! and what a rich field was offered him for the most minute description, if he had known or ventured to take hold of the subject properly!"

I remarked that this subjective tendency was the fault of the public, which decidedly applauds all sentimentality.

"Perhaps so," said Goethe; "but the public is still more pleased if you give it something better. I am certain that, if somebody with Wolff's talent at improvisation could faithfully describe the life of great cities—such as Rome, Naples, Vienna, Hamburg, or London—and that in such a lively manner that his hearers would believe they saw with their own eyes, everybody would be enchanted. If he breaks through to the objective, he is saved—the stuff is in him; for he is not without imagination. Only he must make up his mind at once, and strive to grasp it."

"I fear," said I, "that this will be harder than we imagine, since it demands entire regeneration of his mode of thought. Even if he succeed, he will at all events come to a momentary standstill with his production, and long practice will be required to make the objective a second nature."

"The step, I grant, is very great," said Goethe; "but he must take courage, and make his resolution at once. It is, in such matters, like the dread of water in bathing—we must jump in at once, and the element is ours.

"If a person learns to sing," continued Goethe, "all the notes that are within his natural compass are easy to him, while those beyond the compass are at first extremely difficult. But, to be a vocalist, he must have them all at command. Just so with the poet—he deserves not the name while he only speaks out his few subjective feelings; but as soon as he can appropriate to himself, and express, the world, he is a poet. Then he is inexhaustible, and can be always new; while a subjective nature has soon talked out his little internal material, and is at last ruined by mannerism. People always talk of the study of the ancients; but what does that mean, except that it says, turn your attention to the real world, and try to express it—for that is what the ancients did."

Goethe arose and walked to and fro, while I remained seated at the table as he likes to see me. He stood a moment at the stove; and then, like one who has reflected, came to me, and, with his finger on his lips, said:

"I will now tell you something you will often find confirmed in your experience. All eras in a state of decline and dissolution are subjective; on the other hand, all progressive eras have an objective tendency. Our present time is retrograde, for it is subjective: we see this not merely in poetry, but also in painting, and much besides. Every healthy effort, on the contrary, is directed from the inward to the outward world; as you see in all great eras, which were really in a state of progression and all of an objective nature."

These remarks led to a most interesting conversation, in which especial mention was made of the great period of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The conversation now turned upon the theatre, and the weak, sentimental, gloomy character of modern productions.

"Molière is my strength and consolation at present," said I; "I have translated his *Avare*, and am now busy with his *Médecin malgré lui*. Molière is indeed a great, a genuine (*reiner*) man."

"Yes," said Goethe, "a genuine man; that is the proper term. There is nothing distorted about him. He ruled the manners of his day; while, on the contrary, our Iffland and Kotzebue allowed themselves to be ruled by theirs, and were limited and confined in them. Molière chastised men by drawing them just as they were."

"I would give something," said I, "to see his plays acted in all their purity! Yet such things are much too strong and natural for the public, so far as I am acquainted with it. Is not this over-refinement to be attributed to the so-called ideal literature of certain authors?"

"No," said Goethe, "it has its source in society itself. What business have our young girls at the theatre? They do not belong to it—they belong to the convent, the theatre is only for men and women, who know something of human affairs. When Molière wrote, girls were in the convent, and he was not forced to think about them. But now we cannot get rid of these young girls; and pieces which are weak, and therefore *proper*, will continue to be produced. Be wise and stay away, as I do. I was really interested in the theatre only so long as I could have a practical influence upon it. It was my delight to bring the establishment to a high degree of perfection; and, when there was a performance, my interest was not so much in the pieces as in observing whether the actors played as they ought. The faults I wished to point out I sent in writing to the *Regisseur*, and I was sure they would be avoided on the next representation. Now that I can have no practical influence in the theatre, I feel no call to enter it; I should be forced to endure defects without being able to amend them, and that would not suit me. And with the reading of plays, it is no better. The young German poets are eternally sending me tragedies; but what am I to do with them? I have never read German plays except with the view of seeing whether I could stage them; in every other respect they were indifferent to me. What am I to do now with the pieces of these young people?

I can gain nothing for myself by reading how things ought *not* to be done; and I cannot assist the young poets in a matter already finished. If, instead of their printed plays, they would send me the plan of a play, I could at least say, 'Do it,' or 'Leave it alone,' or 'Do it this way,' or 'Do it that'; and in this there might be some use.

"The whole mischief proceeds from this, that poetical culture is so widely diffused in Germany that nobody now ever makes a bad verse. The young poets who send me their works are not inferior to their predecessors; and, since they see these praised so highly, they cannot understand why they also are not praised. And yet we cannot encourage them, when talents of the sort exist by hundreds; we ought not to favour superfluities while so much that is useful remains to be done. Were there a single one who towered above all the rest, it would be well, for the world can only be served by the extraordinary."

Thursday, February 16, 1826.

I went at seven this evening to Goethe, whom I found alone in his room. I sat down by him at the table, and told him that yesterday I had seen at the inn the Duke of Wellington, who was passing through on his way to St. Petersburg. "Indeed!" said Goethe, with animation; "what was he like?—tell me all about him. Does he look like his portrait?"

"Yes," said I; "but better, with more of marked character. If you look at his face, all the portraits are naught. To see him once is never to forget him. His eyes are brown, and of the serenest brilliancy; his glance is felt; his mouth speaks, even when it is closed; he looks a man who has had many thoughts and has lived through the greatest deeds, who now can handle the world serenely and calmly, and whom nothing more can disturb. He seemed to me as hard and as tempered as a Damascus blade. By his appearance, he is far advanced in the fifties; upright, slim, not very tall or stout. I saw him getting into his carriage to depart. There was something uncommonly cordial in his salutation as he passed through the crowd; bowing slightly, he touched his hat with his finger." Goethe listened to my description with visible interest. "You have seen one hero more," said he; "that is something."

We then talked of Napoleon, and I lamented that I had never seen him.

"Certainly," said Goethe, "that also was worth the trouble. What a compendium of the world!" "Did he look like something?" asked I. "He *was* something," replied Goethe; "and he looked what he was—that was all."

I had brought with me for Goethe a very remarkable poem, of which I had spoken to him some evenings before—a poem of his own, written so long since that he had quite forgotten it. It was printed in the beginning of the year 1776, in *Die Sichtbaren* (The Visible), a periodical published at the time in Frankfort, and had been brought to Weimar by an old servant of Goethe's, through whom it had fallen into my hands. Undoubtedly it is the earliest known poem of Goethe's. The subject was the descent of Christ into Hell; and it was remarkable to observe the readiness of the young author with his religious images. The purpose of the poem might have suited Klopstock; but the execution was different; it was stronger, freer, and easier, and had greater energy and better arrangement. Extraordinary ardour recalled strong boisterous youth. Through a want of subject-matter, it constantly reverted to the same point, and it was too long.

I placed before Goethe the yellow worn-out paper, and as soon as he saw it he remembered his poem. "It is possible," said he, "that Fräulein von Klettenberg induced me to write it: the heading shows that it was written by desire, and I know not any other friend who could have desired such a subject. I was then in want of materials, and was rejoiced when I got anything that I could sing. Lately I came across a poem of that period which I wrote in English and in which I complained of the dearth of poetic subjects. We Germans are really ill off in that respect; our earliest history lies too much in obscurity, and the later is without general native interest, through the want of one ruling dynasty. Klopstock tried Arminius, but the subject lies too far off; nobody feels any connection with it or knows what to make of it, accordingly it has never been popular or produced any result. I made a happy hit with my *Goetz von Berlichingen*; that was at any rate bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, and something could be done with it.

"For *Werther* and *Faust* I was, on the contrary, obliged to draw upon my own bosom; what was handed down to me did not go far. I made devils and witches but once; I was glad when I had consumed my northern inheritance, and turned to the tables of the Greeks. Had I earlier known how many excellent things have been in existence for hundreds and thousands of years, I should not have written a line, but should have done something else."

Easter Day, March 26, 1826.

To-day, at dinner, Goethe was in one of his pleasantest moods. He had received something he highly valued, Lord Byron's manuscript of the dedication to his *Sardanapalus*. He showed it to us after dinner, at the same time teasing his daughter to give him back Byron's letter from Genoa. "You see, my dear child," said he, "I have now everything that relates to my connection with Byron; even this valuable paper comes to me to-day in a remarkable manner, and now nothing is wanting but that letter."

However, the amiable admirer of Byron would not restore the letter. "You gave it to me once, dear father," said she, "and I shall not give it back; and if you wish, as is fit, that like should be with like, you had better give me the precious paper of to-day, and I will keep them all together." This was still more repugnant to Goethe, and the playful contest lasted for some time.

After we had risen from table and the ladies had gone upstairs, I remained with Goethe alone. He brought from his work-room a red portfolio, took it to the window, and showed me its contents. "Look," said he, "here I have everything that relates to my connection with Lord Byron. Here is his letter from Leghorn; this is a copy of his dedication; this is my poem; and here is what I wrote for Medwin's *Conversations*; now, I only want the letter from Genoa, and she will not give it me."

Goethe then told me of a friendly request this day made to him from England with reference to Lord Byron, which had pleased him. His mind was just now full of Byron; and he said a thousand interesting things about him, his works, and his talents.

"The English," said he, among other things, "may think of Byron as they please; but this is certain, that they can show no poet who is to be compared to him. He is different from all the others, and for the most part greater."

Monday, May 15, 1826.

I talked with Goethe to-day about St.[1] Schütze, of whom he spoke very kindly. "When I was ill a few weeks since," said he, "I read his *Heitere Stunden* (Cheerful Hours) with great pleasure. If Schütze had lived in England, he would have made an epoch; for, with his gift of observing and depicting, nothing was wanting but the sight of life on a large scale."

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[1] i.e. Stephan (not "Saint").

Thursday, June 1, 1826.

Goethe spoke of the *Globe*.[1] "The contributors," said he. "are men of the world: cheerful, clear in their views, bold to the last degree. In their censure they are polished and *galant*; whereas our German *literati* always think they must hate those who do not think like themselves. I consider the *Globe* one of our most interesting periodicals, and could not do without it."

Wednesday, July 26, 1826.

This evening I had the pleasure of hearing Goethe say a great deal about the theatre.

I told him that one of my friends intended to arrange Lord Byron's *Two Foscari* for the stage. Goethe doubted his success.

"It is indeed a temptation," he said. "When a piece makes a deep impression on us in reading, we think it will do the same upon the stage, and that we could obtain such a result with little trouble. But this is by no means so. A piece that is not originally, by the intent and skill of the poet, written for the boards, will not succeed; but, whatever is done to it, will always remain something unmanageable. What trouble have I taken with my *Goetz von Berlichingen*! yet it will not go right as an acting play, but is too long; and I have been forced to divide it into two parts, of which the last is indeed theatrically effective, while the first is to be looked upon as a mere introduction. If the first part were given only once as an introduction, and then the second repeatedly, it might succeed. It is the same with *Wallenstein*: *The Piccolomini* does not bear repetition; but *Wallenstein's Death* is always seen with delight."

I asked how a piece must be constructed so as to be fit for the theatre.

"It must be symbolical," replied Goethe; "that is to say, each incident must be significant in itself, and lead to another still more important. The *Tartuffe* of Molière is, in this respect, a great example. Only think what an introduction is the first scene! From the very beginning everything is highly significant, and leads us to expect something still more important. The beginning of Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* is also admirable;

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[1] The celebrated French paper.—J. O.

but that of the *Tartuffe* comes only once into the world: it is the greatest and best thing that exists of the kind."

We then came to the pieces of Calderon.

"In Calderon," said Goethe, "you find the same perfect adaptation to the theatre. His pieces are throughout fit for the boards; there is not a touch in them not directed towards the required effect. Calderon is a genius who had also the finest understanding."

"It is singular," said I, "that the dramas of Shakespeare are not theatrical pieces, properly so called, since he wrote them all for his theatre."

"Shakespeare," replied Goethe, "wrote those pieces direct from his own nature. Then, too, his times, and the existing arrangements of the stage, made no demands upon him; people were forced to put up with whatever he gave them. But if Shakespeare had written for the court of Madrid, or for the theatre of Louis XIV, he would probably have adapted himself to a severer theatrical form. This, however, is by no means to be regretted; for what Shakespeare has lost as a theatrical poet he has gained as a poet in general. Shakespeare is a great psychologist, and we learn from his pieces the secrets of human nature."[1]

We then talked of the difficulties in managing a theatre.

"The knotty point," said Goethe, "is so to deal with contingencies that we are not tempted to deviate from our higher maxims. Among the higher maxims is this: to keep a good repertoire of excellent tragedies, operas, and comedies, which may be regarded as permanent. Among contingencies, I reckon a new piece about which the public is anxious, a 'starring' character (*Gastrolle*), and so forth. We must not be led astray by things of this kind, but always return to our repertoire. Our time is so rich in really good pieces that nothing is easier to a connoisseur than to form a good repertoire; but nothing is more difficult than to maintain one.

"When Schiller and I superintended the theatre, we had the great advantage of playing through the summer at Lauchstedt. There we had a select audience, who would have nothing but what was excellent; so we always returned to Weimar thoroughly practised in the best plays, and could repeat all our summer performances in the winter. Besides, the Weimar public had confidence in our management; and, even in things they could not appreciate, they were convinced that we acted best.

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[1] "Wie den Menschen zu Muthe ist." The above is only an approximation.—J. O.

"When the nineties began," continued Goethe, "the proper period of my interest in the theatre was already past; I wrote nothing for the stage, but wished to devote myself to epic poetry. Schiller revived my extinct interest; and, for the sake of his works, I again took part in the theatre. At the time of my *Clavigo*, I could easily have written a dozen theatrical pieces. I had no want of subjects, and production was easy to me. I might have written a piece every week, and I am sorry I did not."

Wednesday, November 8, 1826.

To-day, Goethe spoke again of Lord Byron with admiration. "I have," said he, "read once more his *Deformed Transformed*, and to me his talent appears greater than ever. His devil was suggested by my Mephistopheles; but it is no imitation—it is thoroughly new and original; close, genuine, and spirited. There are no weak passages—not a place where you could put the head of a pin, where you do not find invention and thought. Were it not for his hypochondriacal negative turn, he would be as great as Shakespeare and the ancients." I expressed surprise.

"Yes," said Goethe, "you may believe me. I have studied him anew, and am confirmed in this opinion."

In conversation some time ago, Goethe had remarked that Byron had too much *empeiria*.[1] I did not well understand what he meant; but I forbore to ask, and thought of the matter in silence. However, I got nothing by reflection, and found that I must wait till my improved culture or some happy circumstance should unlock the secret. Such a one occurred when an excellent representation of *Macbeth* at the theatre produced a strong effect upon me, and the next day I took up Byron's works to read his *Beppo*. Now, I felt I could not relish this poem after *Macbeth*; and the more I read, the more I became enlightened as to Goethe's meaning.

In *Macbeth*, I had been impressed by a spirit whose grandeur, power, and sublimity could have proceeded from none but Shakespeare. There was the innate quality of a high and deep nature, which raises its possessor above all mankind, and makes him a great poet. Whatever has been given to this piece by knowledge of the world or experience was subordinate to the poetic spirit and served only to make this speak out and predominate. The great poet ruled us and lifted us up to his own point of view.

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[1] The import of this Greek word for "experience," and its cognate word "empiric," has nothing in common with the notion of "quackery." The general meaning is, that Byron is too *worldly*.—J. O.

While reading *Beppo*, on the contrary, I felt the predominance of a nefarious empirical world, with which the mind that introduced it to us had in a certain measure associated itself. I no more found the great and pure thoughts of a highly-gifted poet: by frequent intercourse with the world, the poet's mode of thought seemed to have acquired the same stamp. He seemed to be on the same level with all intellectual men of the world of the higher class; being only distinguished from them by his great talent for representation, so that he might be regarded as their mouthpiece.

So I felt, in reading *Beppo*, that Lord Byron had too much *empeiria*; not because he brought too much real life before us, but because his higher poetic nature seemed to be silent, or even expelled by an empiric mode of thought.

Wednesday, November 29, 1826.

I had now also read Lord Byron's *Deformed Transformed*, and talked with Goethe about it after dinner.

"Am I not right?" said he; "the first scenes are great—poetically great. The remainder, when the subject wanders to the siege of Rome, I will not call poetical, but it must be averred that it is very clever."

"To the highest degree," said I; "but there is no art in being clever when nothing is respected."

Goethe laughed. "You are not quite wrong," said he. "We must, indeed, confess that the poet says more than ought to be said. He tells us the truth; but it is disagreeable, and we should like him better if he held his peace. There are things in the world which the poet should rather conceal than disclose; but this openness lies in Byron's character, and you would annihilate him if you made him other than he is."

"Yes," said I, "he is in the highest degree clever. How excellent, for instance, is this passage!—

> The devil speaks truth much oftener than he 's deemed;
> He hath an ignorant audience."

"That is as good and as free as one of my Mephistopheles' sayings."

"Since we are talking of Mephistopheles," continued Goethe, "I will show you something Coudray has brought me from Paris. What do you think of it?"

He laid before me a lithograph, representing the scene where Faust and Mephistopheles, on their way to free Margaret from prison, are rushing by the gallows at night on two horses. Faust rides a black horse; which gallops with all its might, and seems, like its rider, afraid of the spectres under the gallows. They ride so fast that Faust can scarcely keep his seat; the wind has blown off his cap, which, fastened by straps about his neck, flies far behind him. He has turned his fearful inquiring face to Mephistopheles, to whom he listens. Mephistopheles, on the contrary, sits undisturbed, like a being of a higher order: he rides no living horse, for he loves not what is living; indeed, he does not need it, for his will moves him with the swiftness he requires. He has a horse merely because he must look as if he were riding, and it has been quite enough for him to take a beast that is a mere bag of bones, from the first field he came to. It is of a bright colour, and seems to be phosphorescent in the darkness of night. It is neither bridled nor saddled. The supernatural rider sits easily and negligently, with his face turned towards Faust in conversation. The opposing element of air does not exist for him; neither he nor his horse feels anything of it. Not a hair of either is stirred.

We expressed much pleasure at this ingenious composition. "I confess," said Goethe, "I myself did not think it out so perfectly. Here is another. What say you to this?"

I saw a representation of the wild drinking scene in Auerbach's cellar, at the all-important moment when the wine sparkles up into flames and the brutality of the drinkers is shown in the most varied ways. All is passion and movement; Mephistopheles alone maintains his usual composure. The wild cursing and screaming, and the drawn knife of the man who stands next him, are to him nothing. He has seated himself on a corner of the table, dangling his legs. His upraised finger is enough to subdue flame and passion.

The longer this excellent design was looked at, the greater seemed the intelligence of the artist; who made no figure like another, but in each one expressed some different part of the action.

"M. Delacroix," said Goethe, "is a man of great talent, who found in *Faust* his proper aliment. The French censure his wildness, but it suits him well here. He will, I hope, go through all *Faust*, and I anticipate a special pleasure from the witches' kitchen and the scenes on the Brocken. We can see he has a good knowledge of life, for which a city like Paris has given him the best opportunity."

I observed that these designs greatly conduce to the comprehension of a poem.

"Undoubtedly," said Goethe; "for the more perfect imagination of such an artist constrains us to think the situations as beautiful as he conceived them himself. And if I must confess that M. Delacroix has in some scenes surpassed my own notions, how much more will the reader find all in full life and surpassing his imagination!"

Monday, December 11, 1826.

I found Goethe in a very happy mood. "Alexander von Humboldt has been some hours with me this morning," said he. "What a man he is! Long as I have known him, he ever surprises me anew. He has not his equal in knowledge and living wisdom. He has a many-sidedness such as I have found nowhere else. On whatever point you approach him, he is at home, and lavishes upon us his intellectual treasures. He is like a fountain with many pipes, under which you need only hold a vessel; refreshing and inexhaustible streams are ever flowing. He will stay here some days; and I already feel that it will be with me as if I had lived for years."

Wednesday, December 13, 1826.

At table, the ladies praised a portrait by a young painter. "What is most surprising," they added, "he has learned everything by himself." This could be seen particularly in the hands, which were not correctly and artistically drawn. "We see," said Goethe, "that the young man has talent; however, you should not praise, but rather blame him, for learning everything by himself. A man of talent is not born to be left to himself, but to devote himself to art and good masters who will make something of him. I have lately read a letter from Mozart, in reply to a baron who had sent him his composition: he writes somewhat in this fashion:

"'You dilettanti must be blamed for two faults, since two you generally have: either you have no thoughts of your own, and take those of others; or, if you have thoughts of your own, you do not know what to do with them.'

"Is not this capital? and does not this fine remark, which Mozart makes about music, apply to all other arts?"

Goethe continued: "Leonardo da Vinci says, 'If your son has not sense enough to bring out what he draws by a bold shadowing, so that we can grasp it with our hands, he has no talent.' And further, 'If your son is a perfect master of perspective and anatomy, send him to a good master.'

"And now," said Goethe, "our young artists scarcely understand either when they leave their masters. So much have times altered.

"Our young painters," continued Goethe, "lack heart and intellect. Their inventions express nothing and effect nothing: they paint swords that do not cut, and arrows that do not hit; and I often think, in spite of myself, that all intellect has vanished from the world."

"And yet," I replied, "we should naturally think that the great military events of latter years would have stirred the intellect."

"They have stirred the will more than the intellect," said Goethe, "and the poetical intellect more than the artistic; while all naïveté and sensuousness are lost. Without these two great requisites, how can a painter produce anything in which we can take any pleasure?"

I said I had lately, in his *Italian Travels*, read of a picture by Correggio, which represents a "weaning," and in which the Infant Christ in Mary's lap is in doubt between his mother's breast and a pear held before him, and does not know which of the two to choose.

"Aye," said Goethe, "there is a little picture for you! There are mind, naïveté, sensuousness, all together. The sacred subject is endowed with a universally human interest, and stands as a symbol for a period of life we must all pass through. Such a picture is immortal, because it grasps backwards at the earliest times of humanity, and forwards at the latest. On the contrary, if Christ were painted suffering the little children to come unto him, it would be a picture that expressed nothing—at any rate, nothing of importance.

"For above fifty years," continued Goethe, "I have watched German painting—not merely watched it, but endeavoured to exert some influence on it; and now I can say that, as the matter now stands, little is to be expected. Some great talent must come, which will at once appropriate all that is good in the period, and thus surpass everyone. The means are at hand, and the way is pointed out. We have now the works of Phidias before our eyes, whereas in our youth nothing of the sort was to be thought of. Nothing is wanting but a great talent, and this I hope will come; perhaps it is already in its cradle, and you will live to see its brilliancy."

Wednesday, December 20, 1826.

I told Goethe after dinner, that I had made a discovery which afforded me much pleasure: I had observed in a burning taper that the lower transparent part of the flame exhibits a phenomenon analogous to that of the blue sky, since in both we see darkness through a lighted but dense medium.

I asked Goethe whether he knew this phenomenon of the taper, and had mentioned it in his *Theory of Colours*.

"Certainly," said he. He then took down a volume of the *Theory of Colours*, and read me paragraphs in which were described all that I had seen. "I am glad," said he, "that you have been struck with this phenomenon, without learning it from my *Theory*; for you have now comprehended it, and may say that you possess it. Moreover, you have thus gained a point of view from which you can proceed to the other phenomena. I will show you a new one now."

It was about four o'clock: the sky was clouded over, and twilight was beginning. Goethe lighted a candle, and went with it to a table near the window. He then set it on a white sheet of paper, and placed a small stick so that the light of the candle threw a shadow from the stick towards the daylight. "Now," said Goethe, "what do you say of this shadow?" "The shadow is blue," replied I. "There you get your blue again," said Goethe. "But what do you see on the other side of the stick towards the taper?" "Another shadow." "But of what colour?" "The shadow is a reddish yellow," I replied; "but whence proceeds this double phenomenon?" "There is a point for you!" said Goethe: "see if you can work it out. There is a solution, but it is difficult. Do not look at my *Theory of Colours* until you have given up all hopes of finding it out yourself." I made this promise willingly.

"The phenomenon of the lower part of the taper," said Goethe, "where a transparent flame stands before darkness and produces a blue colour, I will now show you on a larger scale." He took a spoon and poured into it some spirit, which he set on fire. A transparent flame was again produced; through this the darkness appeared blue. If I held the burning spirit against the darkness, the blue increased in intensity;

but if I held it against the light, the blue became fainter or vanished altogether.

I was delighted with this phenomenon. "Yes," said Goethe, "this is the grandeur of Nature, that she is so simple, and that she always repeats her greatest phenomena on a small scale. The law by which the sky is blue may likewise be observed in the lower part of a burning taper, in burning spirits, and also in the bright smoke that rises from a village with dark mountains in the background."

"But how do the disciples of Newton explain this extremely simple phenomenon?" "That you must not know," answered Goethe. "Their explanation is too stupid, and a good headpiece is incredibly damaged when it meddles with stupidities. Do not trouble yourself about the Newtonians; but be satisfied with the pure doctrine, and you will find it quite enough for you."

"An occupation with that which is wrong," said I, "is perhaps in this case as unpleasant and as injurious as taking up a bad tragedy to illustrate it in all its parts and to expose it in its nudity."

"The case is precisely the same," said Goethe, "and we should not meddle with anything of the sort without actual necessity. I receive mathematics as the most sublime and useful science, so long as they are applied in their proper place; but I cannot commend the misuse of them in matters which do not belong to their sphere, and in which, noble science as they are, they seem to be mere nonsense. As if, forsooth! things only exist when they can be mathematically demonstrated. It would be foolish for a man not to believe in his mistress's love because she could not prove it to him mathematically. She can mathematically prove her dowry, but not her love. The mathematicians did not find out the metamorphosis of plants. I have achieved this discovery without mathematics, and the mathematicians were forced to put up with it. To understand the phenomena of colour, nothing is required but unbiassed observation and a sound head; but these are scarcer than folks imagine."

"How do the French and English of the present day stand with respect to the theory of colour?" asked I. "Each of the two nations," replied Goethe, "has its advantages and disadvantages. With the English, it is a good quality, that they make everything practical, but they are pedants. The French have good brains; but with them everything must be positive, and if it is not so they make it so. However, with respect to the theory of colours, they are in a good way, and one of their best men comes near the truth. He says that colours are inherent in the things themselves; for as there is in nature an acidulating principle, so also is there a colouring principle. This view, I admit, does not explain the phenomena; but it places the object within the sphere of nature, and frees it from the load of mathematics."

The Berlin papers were brought in, and Goethe sat down to read them. He handed one of them to me, and I found in the theatrical intelligence that at the opera house and the theatre royal they gave just as bad pieces as they gave here. "How should it be otherwise?" said Goethe. "There is no doubt that with the help of good English, French, and Spanish pieces, a repertoire sufficient to furnish a good piece every evening can be formed. But what need to see good pieces continually does a nation feel? When Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides lived, it was different. Then there was mind enough to desire only what was really greatest and best. But in our miserable times, where is felt a need for the best? where are the organs to appreciate it?

"And then," continued Goethe, "people *will* have something new. In Berlin or Paris, the public is always the same. New pieces are written and brought out in Paris, and you must endure five or six thoroughly bad ones before you are compensated by a single good one. The only expedient to keep up a German theatre at the present time, is that of 'starring' (*Gastrollen*). If I had the direction of the theatre now, the whole winter should be provided with excellent 'stars.' Thus, not only would all the good pieces be represented once more, but the interest of the audience would be led more from the pieces to the acting; a power of comparing and judging would be acquired; the public would gain in penetration, and the superior acting of a distinguished star would maintain our own actors in a state of emulation. Keep on with your starring, and you will be astonished at the benefit both to theatre and to public. I foresee a time when a clever man who understands the matter will take four theatres at once, and provide them with stars by turns. And I am sure he will keep his ground better than if he had only one."

Wednesday, December 27, 1826.

I had been sedulously reflecting at home, on the phenomenon of the blue and yellow shadows; and, although this long remained a riddle to me, a light gleamed upon me after constant meditation, and I was gradually convinced I understood the phenomenon.

To-day at dinner, I told Goethe I had solved the riddle. "That is saying a great deal," said Goethe; "you shall show me after dinner." "I would rather write my solution down," returned I, "for I want the right words for a verbal explanation." "You may write it down afterwards, but to-day you shall solve the problem before my eyes, and demonstrate it with your own mouth, that I may see whether you are in the right way."

After dinner, when it was still quite light, Goethe said to me, "Can you make the experiment now?" "No," said I. "Why not?" asked Goethe. "It is too light," I replied. "We must have a little dusk, in order that the candle may throw a decided shade, but not so much that daylight cannot fall upon this shadow." "Hm!" said Goethe, "that is not wrong."

The dusk at last set in. Goethe lighted the wax taper, and gave me a sheet of white paper and a stick. I placed the taper on the table near the window, laid the sheet of paper near it; and, when I placed the stick in the middle of the paper, between daylight and candle-light, the phenomenon was there in all its beauty. The shadow towards the candle was a decided yellow, and the one towards the window a perfect blue.

"Now," said Goethe, "how is the blue shadow produced?" "Before I explain this," said I, "I will lay down the fundamental law, from which I deduce both phenomena. Light and darkness are not colours; but they are the two extremes between which, and by the modification of which, all colours are produced. Next to the extremes of light and darkness, arise the two colours yellow and blue. The yellow borders on light, inasmuch as it is produced by seeing light through a dimmed transparency; the blue borders on darkness, inasmuch as it is produced by seeing darkness through an illuminated transparency. If we now come to our phenomena," I continued, "we see that the stick, through the strength of the taper-light, casts a decided shadow. This shadow would appear as so much black darkness if I closed the shutters and shut out the light of day; but here the daylight enters freely by the window, and forms an illuminated medium, through which I see the darkness of the shadow; and thus, in conformity with our law, the blue colour is produced."

Goethe laughed. "Well, that would be the blue, would it?"

said he; "but how do you explain the yellow shadow?" "From the law of the dimmed light," I replied. "The burning taper throws upon the white paper a light which has already a slightly yellowish tinge. The daylight, however, is strong enough to throw a weak shadow; which, as far as it extends, dims the light—and thus, in conformity with our law, the yellow colour is produced. If I lessen the dimness by bringing the shadow as nearly as possible to the candle, a pure clear yellow is produced; but if I increase the dimness by removing the shadow as far as possible from the candle, the yellow is heightened to a reddish yellow, or even to a red."

Goethe again laughed, and looked very mysterious. "Now," said I, "am I right?" "You have observed your phenomenon well, and have described it very prettily," replied Goethe, "but you have not explained it. Your explanation is ingenious, but it is not the right one."

"Help me, then," said I, "and solve the riddle, for I am extremely impatient." "You shall learn the solution," replied Goethe, "but not to-day and not in this manner. I will next show you another phenomenon, which will bring the law plainly before your eyes. You are near the mark, and cannot proceed farther in this direction. When you have once comprehended the new law, you will be transplanted into quite another region. Come some day and dine with me an hour earlier, when the sky is clear; and I will show you a plainer phenomenon, by which you will at once comprehend the law at the foundation of this one. I am very glad," he continued, "that you take this interest in colours; it will prove a source of infinite delight."

When I left Goethe in the evening, I could not get the thought of the phenomenon out of my head, and it occupied my very dreams; but even thus I did not gain a clearer view, and did not advance one step nearer towards the solution of the enigma.

"I am going on, though slowly, with my papers on Natural Science," said Goethe to me lately; "not because I think that I can materially advance science, but on account of the many pleasant associations I maintain by it. Of all occupations, that with nature is the most innocent. As for any connection or correspondence in æsthetical matters, that is not to be thought of. They now want to know what town on the Rhine is meant in my *Hermann and Dorothea*, as if it were not better to choose according to one's fancy. They want truth—they want actuality; and thus poetry is destroyed."

1827

Wednesday, January 3, 1827.

At dinner, we talked over Canning's excellent speech for Portugal.[1] "Some people," said Goethe, "call this speech coarse; but these people know not what they want—they have a morbid desire to be grumblers against all greatness. It is no opposition, it is mere grumbling; they must have something great, that they may hate it. When Napoleon was alive they hated him, and he served as a good conduit-pipe. When it was all over with him, they grumbled at the Holy Alliance, and yet nothing greater or more beneficial for mankind was ever devised. Now it is Canning's turn. His speech for Portugal is the result of a grand consciousness. He thoroughly feels his power and the dignity of his position; and he is right to speak as he feels. This the Sansculottes cannot understand; and what to us seems sublime, seems to them coarse. The grand disturbs them; they are not so constituted as to respect it, and cannot endure it."

Thursday evening, January 4, 1827.

Goethe praised highly the poems of Victor Hugo.

"He is," said he, "a man of decided talent, on whom German literature has had an influence. His poetic youth has unfortunately been disturbed by the pedantry of the classic school; but now he has the *Globe* on his side, and is thus sure of his game. I am inclined to compare him with Manzoni. He has much objectivity, and seems to me quite as important as MM. De Lamartine and De la Vigne. On closely observing him, I see the source of this and other fresh talent of the same sort. They all come from Chateaubriand, who has really a distinguished rhetorico-poetical talent. That you may see how Victor Hugo writes, only read this poem upon Napoleon—*Les Deux Isles.*"

Goethe gave me the book, and went to the stove. I read the poem. "Has he not excellent images," said Goethe, "and has not he managed his subject with great freedom?" He came back to me. "Only look at this passage—how fine it is!" He read the passage about the storm-cloud, from which the lightning darts upward and strikes the hero. "That is fine; for the image is correct: as you will find in the mountains, where we often have the storm beneath us, and where the lightning darts upwards."

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[1] House of Commons, December 12, 1826; against the "absolutist" invasion organized on Spanish soil.

"I praise this in the French," said I, "that their poetry never deserts the firm ground of reality. We can translate their poems into prose without losing anything essential."

"That," said Goethe, "is because the French poets have knowledge, while our German simpletons think they would lose their talent if they laboured for knowledge; although, in fact, all talent must derive its nutriment from knowledge, and thus only is enabled to use its strength. But let them pass; we cannot help them, and real talent soon finds its way. The many young poets who are now carrying on their trade have no real talent; they only show an impotence which has been excited into productiveness by the high state of German literature.

"That the French," continued Goethe, "have passed from their pedantry into a freer manner is not surprising. Even before the revolution, Diderot and minds like his sought to break open this path. The revolution itself, and the reign of Napoleon, have been favourable to the cause; for if the years of war allowed no real poetical interest to spring up, and were consequently for the moment unfavourable to the Muses, yet there were then formed a multitude of free intellects who now in times of peace attain reflection, and come forward as talents of importance."

I asked Goethe whether the classical party had been opposed to the excellent Béranger. "The genre of Béranger's poetry," said Goethe, "is old and traditional, and people were accustomed to it. However, he has been in many respects freer than his predecessors, and has therefore been attacked by the pedantic party."

The conversation turned upon painting, and on the mischief of the antiquity-worshipping school. "You do not pretend to be a connoisseur," said Goethe; "but I will show you a picture in which, though it has been painted by one of the best living German artists, you will at the first glance be struck by the most glaring offences against the primary laws of art. You will see that details are nicely done, but you will be dissatisfied with the whole and will not know what to make of it: and this not because the painter has not sufficient talent; but because his mind, which should have directed his talent, is darkened, like that of all the other bigots to antiquity—so that he ignores the perfect masters, and goes back for patterns to their imperfect predecessors.

"Raphael and his contemporaries broke through a limited mannerism, to nature and freedom. And now our artists, instead of being thankful, using these advantages, and proceeding on the good way, return to the state of limitation. This is too bad, and it is hard to understand such darkening of the intellect. And, since in this course they find no support in art itself, they seek one from religion and faction—without these two they could not sustain themselves in their weakness.

"There is," continued Goethe, "through all art a filiation. If you see a great master, you will always find that he used what was good in his predecessors, and that it was this made him great. Men like Raphael do not spring out of the ground. They took root in the antique and the best which had been done before them. Had they not used the advantages of their time, there would be little to say about them."

The conversation now turned upon old German poetry: I mentioned Flemming. "Flemming," said Goethe, "is a very fair talent; a little prosaic and citizen-like, and of no practical use nowadays. It is strange," he continued, "that with all I have done, there is not one of my poems that would suit the Lutheran hymn-book." I laughed and assented, while I said to myself that in this odd expression there was more than could be seen at the first glance.

Sunday, January 14, 1827.

I found a musical party at Goethe's. The performers were the Eberwein family and some members of the orchestra. Among the few hearers were General Superintendent Röhr, Hofrath Vogel, and some ladies. Goethe had wished to hear a quartet by a celebrated young composer, and this was played first. Karl Eberwein, a boy twelve years old, played the piano to Goethe's great satisfaction, and indeed admirably—so that the quartet was in every respect well performed.

"It is a strange state," said Goethe, "to which the great improvements in the technical and mechanical part of the art have brought our newest composers. Their productions are no longer music; they go beyond the level of human feelings, and no response can be given them from the mind and heart. How do *you* feel? I hear with my ears only."

I replied that I fared no better.

"Yet the Allegro," said he, "had character; that ceaseless whirling and twirling brought before my mind the witches' dance on the Blocksberg, and thus I had a picture to illustrate this odd music."

After a pause, during which the party discoursed and took refreshments, Goethe asked Madame Eberwein to sing some songs. She sang the beautiful song, *Um Mitternacht*, with Zelter's music, which made the deepest impression.

"That song," said Goethe, "remains beautiful, however often it is heard! There is something eternal, indestructible, in the melody!"

The *Erlkönig* obtained great applause; and the aria, "Ich hab's gesagt der guten Mutter," made everyone remark that the music so happily fitted the words that it could not even be conceived otherwise. Goethe himself was in the highest degree pleased.

By way of conclusion to this pleasant evening, Madame Eberwein, at Goethe's request, sang some songs from his *Divan*, with her husband's music. The passage, "Jussuf's Reize möcht' ich borgen," pleased Goethe especially. "Eberwein," he said, "sometimes surpasses himself." He then asked for the song, "Ach um deine feuchten Schwingen," which was also of a kind to excite the deepest emotions.

After the party had left, I remained some moments alone with Goethe. "I have," said he, "this evening made the remark that these songs in the *Divan* have no further connection with me. Both the Oriental and the impassioned elements have ceased to live in me. I have left them behind, like a cast-off snake-skin on my path. The song, *Um Mitternacht*, on the contrary, has not lost its connection with me; it is a living part of me, and goes on living with me still.

"Often, my own productions seem wholly strange to me. To-day, I read a passage in French, and thought as I read: 'This man speaks cleverly enough—you would not have said it otherwise': when I look at it closely, I find it is a passage translated from my own writings!"

Monday evening, January 15, 1827.

After the completion of the *Helena*, Goethe had employed himself last summer with the continuation of the *Wanderjahre*. He often talked to me about the progress of this work.

"The better to use the materials I possess," said he to me one day, "I have taken the first part entirely to pieces; and I intend, by mingling the old with the new, to make two parts. I have ordered everything that is printed to be copied entire. The places where I have new matter to introduce are marked; and, when my secretary comes to such a mark, I dictate what is wanting, and thus compel myself never to let my work stop."

Another day he said to me, "All the printed part of the *Wanderjahre* is now completely copied. The places where I am to introduce new matter are filled with blue paper, so that I have always before my eyes what is yet to be done. As I go on at present, the blue spots gradually vanish, to my great delight."

Some weeks ago, I had heard from his secretary that he was at work on a new *novel*. I therefore abstained from evening visits, and satisfied myself with seeing him once a week at dinner. The novel had now been finished for some time, and this evening he showed me the first sheets. I read as far as the important passage where all stand round the dead tiger, and the messenger brings the intelligence that the lion has laid himself in the sun by the ruins.

The going out to hunt, the old ruins of the castle, the fair, the way through the fields to the ruins—were all distinctly painted.

"Your excellency," said I, "must have worked after a very defined plan."

"Yes, indeed," replied Goethe; "I was going to treat the subject thirty years ago, and have carried it in my head ever since. The work went on oddly enough. At that time, immediately after *Hermann and Dorothea*, I meant to treat it in epic form and in hexameters, and had drawn up a complete outline with this view. But when I took up the subject again, not being able to find my old outline, I was obliged to make a new one suitable to the altered form I intended to give the subject. Now my work is ended, the old outline is again found; and I am glad I did not have it earlier, for it would only have confused me. The action and the progress of development were indeed unaltered, but the details were entirely different; it would not have been applicable to this prose form."

"That is a beautiful situation," said I, "where Honorio, opposite to the princess, stands over the dead tiger; when the lamenting woman with her boy comes up, and when the prince too with his retinue of huntsmen hastens to join this singular group; it would make an excellent picture, and I should like to see it painted."

"Yes," said Goethe, "that would be a fine picture. Yet perhaps," continued he, after some reflection, "the subject is almost too rich, and the figures are too many; so that it would be very difficult for the artist to group them, and to distribute the light and shade. That earlier moment, where Honorio kneels on the tiger, and the princess is opposite to him on horseback, I have imagined as a picture, and that might be done."

I felt that Goethe was right, and added that this moment contained in fact the gist of the whole situation. I also remarked that this novel had a character quite distinct from those of the *Wanderjahre*, inasmuch as everything represented the external world—everything was real.

"True," said Goethe, "you will find in it scarcely anything of the inward world, and in my other things there is almost too much."

"I am now curious to learn," said I, "how the lion will be conquered; I almost guess that this will take place in quite a different manner, but *how* I cannot conceive." "It would not be right for you to guess it," said Goethe, "and I will not reveal the secret to-day. On Thursday evening I will give you the conclusion. Till then, the lion shall lie in the sun."

I turned the conversation to the second part of *Faust*; especially the classical Walpurgis Night, which existed as yet only as a sketch, and which Goethe had told me he meant to print in that form. I had ventured to advise him not to do so; for if it were once printed it would be always left in this unfinished state. Goethe must have thought that over in the meantime, for he now told me that he had resolved not to print the sketch.

"I am very glad of it," said I; "for now I shall hope to see you complete it."

"It might be done in three months," said he; "but when am I to get time for it? The day has too many claims on me; it is difficult to isolate myself sufficiently. This morning, the hereditary Grand Duke was with me; to-morrow at noon the Grand Duchess proposes visiting me. I must prize such visits as a high favour; they embellish my life, but they occupy my mind. I am obliged to think what I have new to offer to such dignified personages, and how I can worthily entertain them."

"And yet," said I, "you finished *Helena* last winter when you were no less disturbed than now."

"Why," he replied, "one goes on, and must go on; but it is difficult."

"'Tis well," said I, "that your outline is so complete."

"The outline is indeed complete," said Goethe; "but the most difficult part is yet to be done; and, in the execution of parts, everything depends too much on luck. The classic Walpurgis Night must be written in rhyme, and yet the whole must have an antique character. It is not easy to find a suitable sort of verse;—and then the dialogue!"

"Is not that also in the plan?" said I.

"The *what* is there," replied Goethe, "but not the *how*. Then, only think what is to be said on that mad night! Faust's speech to Proserpine, when he would move her to give him Helena—what a speech should that be, when Proserpine herself is moved to tears! All this is not easy to do, and depends much on good luck; nay, almost entirely on the mood and strength at the moment."

Wednesday, January 17, 1827.

Lately, during Goethe's occasional indisposition, we had dined in his work-room, which looks out on the garden. To-day, the cloth was again laid in what is called the Urbino-chamber; this I took as a good omen. When I entered, I found Goethe and his son: both welcomed me in their naïve, affectionate manner; Goethe himself in his happiest mood.

Through the open door of the next room, I saw Chancellor von Müller stooping over a large engraving; he soon came in to us. Frau von Goethe was still absent. The engraving was talked about; and Goethe said that it was a work of the celebrated Parisian Gérard, who had lately sent it to him as a present. "Go you at once," added he, "and take a peep before the soup comes in."

I was delighted both with the sight of the admirable work and with the inscription of the artist dedicating it to Goethe. I could not look long; Frau von Goethe came in, and I hastened back to my place.

"Is not that great?" said Goethe. "You may study it days and weeks before you can find out all its rich thoughts and perfections."

We were very cheerful at table. The Chancellor produced a letter written by an important man at Paris, who had held a difficult post as ambassador here in the time of the French occupation and had from that period kept up a friendly communication with Weimar. He mentioned the Grand Duke and Goethe, and congratulated Weimar for being able to maintain so intimate an alliance between genius and the highest power.

Frau von Goethe teased young Goethe about certain purchases, to which he would not agree.

"We must not spoil fair ladies too much," said Goethe; "they are so ready to break all bounds. Even at Elba, Napoleon received milliners' bills, which he had to pay; yet, in such matters, he would as soon do too little as too much. One day, at the Tuileries, in his presence, a *marchand de modes* offered some valuable goods to his consort. As Napoleon showed no disposition to buy, the man gave him to understand that he was doing but little in this way for his wife. Napoleon did not answer a word, but gave the man such a look that he packed up his things at once and never showed his face again."

"Did he do this when consul?" asked Frau von Goethe.

"Probably when emperor," replied Goethe, "for otherwise his look would not have been so formidable. I cannot but laugh at the man, pierced through by the glance, who saw himself already beheaded or shot."

"I wish," said young Goethe, "that I had good pictures or engravings of all Napoleon's deeds, to decorate a large room."

"The room must be very large," said Goethe; "and even then it would not hold the pictures, so great are the deeds."

The Chancellor turned the conversation on Luden's *History of the Germans*; and I had reason to admire the dexterity and penetration which young Goethe displayed in deducing everything the reviewers had found to blame in the book from the time when it was written and the national views and feelings that had animated the author. We arrived at the result that the wars of Napoleon first explained to us those of Cæsar. "Previously," said Goethe, "Cæsar's book was really not much more than an exercise for classical schools."

From the old German time, the conversation turned upon the Gothic. We spoke of a bookcase that had a Gothic character; and from this were led to discuss the late fashion of arranging entire apartments in the old German and Gothic style, and thus living under the influences of a bygone time.

"In a house," said Goethe, "where there are so many rooms that some are entered only three or four times a year, such a fancy may pass; and I think it a pretty notion of Madame Pankoucke at Paris that she has a Chinese apartment. But I cannot praise the man who fits out the rooms in which he lives with these strange old-fashioned objects. It is a sort of masquerade; which can in the long run do no good in any respect, but must on the contrary have an unfavourable influence on the man adopting it. Such a fashion is in contradiction to the age in which we live, and will only confirm the empty and hollow way of thinking and feeling in which it originates. It is well enough, on a merry winter's evening, to go to a masquerade as a Turk; but what should we think of a man who wore such a mask all the year round? That he was either crazy, or in a fair way to become so before long."

As the reproof did not even lightly touch any of us, we received the truth with the pleasantest feelings.

Goethe rallied me for having, last Monday evening, sacrificed the theatre to him. "He has now been here three years," said he, turning to the others, "and this is the first evening that he has given up the theatre for my sake. I ought to think a great deal of it. I had invited him, and he had promised to come; yet I doubted whether he would keep his word, especially as he was not here when it struck half-past six. Indeed, I should have rejoiced if he had not come; for then I could have said, 'This is a crazy fellow, who loves the theatre better than his dearest friends, and whom nothing can turn aside from his obstinate partiality.' But did I not make it up to you? have I not shown you fine things?"—alluding to the new novel.

We talked of Schiller's *Fiesco*, acted last Saturday. "I saw it for the first time," said I, "and have been thinking whether those extremely rough scenes could not be softened; but I find very little could be done without spoiling the character of the whole."

"You are right—it cannot be done," replied Goethe. "Schiller often talked with me on the matter; for he himself could not endure his first plays, and would never allow them to be acted while we had the direction of the theatre. At last we were in want of pieces, and would willingly have had those three powerful firstlings for our repertoire. But we found it impossible; all the parts were too closely interwoven one with another, so that Schiller found himself constrained to give it up and leave the pieces just as they were."

"'Tis a pity," said I; "for, notwithstanding all their roughness, I love them a thousand times as well as the weak, forced, and unnatural pieces of some of the best of our later tragic poets. A grand intellect and character is felt in everything of Schiller's."

"Yes," said Goethe; "Schiller might do what he would, he could not make anything that would not come out far greater than the best things of these later people. Even when he cut his nails, he showed he was greater than these gentlemen.

"But I have known persons who could never be pleased with those first dramas of Schiller. One summer, at a bathing-place, I was walking through a very secluded narrow path which led to a mill. There Prince —— met me; and, as at the same moment some mules laden with meal-sacks came up to us, we were obliged to get out of the way and enter a small house. Here, in a narrow room, we fell into deep discussion about things divine and human; we came to Schiller's *Robbers*, and the prince expressed himself thus: 'If I had been the Deity on the point of creating the world, and had foreseen that Schiller's *Robbers* would be written in it, I would have left the world uncreated.' What do you say to that? That is a considerable dislike, scarcely comprehensible."

"There is nothing of this dislike," I observed, "in our young people, especially our students. The most excellent and matured pieces by Schiller and others may be performed, and we shall see but few young people and students in the theatre; but if Schiller's *Robbers* or Schiller's *Fiesco* is given, the house is almost filled by students alone."

"So it was," said Goethe, "fifty years ago, and so it will probably be fifty years hence. Let us not imagine that the world will so much advance in culture and good taste that young people will pass over the ruder epoch. What a young man has written is always best enjoyed by young people. Even if the world progresses generally, youth will always begin at the beginning, and the epochs of the world's cultivation will be repeated in the individual. This has ceased to irritate me, and long ago I made a verse in this fashion:

Still let the bonfire blaze away,
Let pleasure never know decay;
Old brooms to stumps are always worn,
And youngsters every day are born.

"I need only look out of the window to see, in the brooms that sweep the street and the children who run about, a visible symbol of the world: always wearing out and always becoming young again. Children's games and the diversions of youth are preserved from century to century; for, absurd as these may appear to a more mature age, children are always children, and are at all times alike. Hence we ought not to put down the midsummer bonfires, or spoil the pleasure which the little dears take in them."

We younger people went into the upper room, while the Chancellor remained with Goethe.

Thursday evening, January 18, 1827.

Goethe had promised me the rest of the novel this evening. I went at half-past six, and found him alone in his comfortable work-room. I sat down with him at table; and, after we had talked over the events of the day, Goethe arose and gave me the last sheets. I began to read, while Goethe walked up and down the room and occasionally stood at the stove.

The sheets of the last evening had ended where the lion is lying in the sun outside the wall of the old ruin, at the foot of an aged beech, and preparations are made to subdue him. The prince is going to send the hunters after him; but the stranger begs him to spare his lion, being confident that he can bring him back into his cage by milder means. "This child," said he, "will do it by pleasant words and the sweet tones of his flute." The prince consents, and, after he has taken precautions, rides back into the town with his men. Honorio, with a number of hunters, occupies the defile; that, in case the lion come down, he may scare him back by kindling a fire. The mother and the child, led by the warder of the castle, ascend the ruin, on the other side of which the lion is lying by the outer wall.

The design is to lure the mighty animal into the spacious castle-yard. The mother and the warder conceal themselves above in the half-ruined hall, while the child goes alone after the lion through the dark opening in the wall of the court-yard. An anxious pause arises. They do not know what has become of the child—his flute gives no sound. The warder reproaches himself for not going also, but the mother is calm.

At last the sounds of the flute are again heard. They approach. The child returns to the castle-yard by the opening in the wall; and the lion, now docile, follows him with heavy step. They go once round the yard. Then the child sits down in a sunny spot; while the lion settles peacefully beside him, and lays one heavy paw in his lap. A thorn has entered it; the child draws it out, and, taking his silk kerchief from his neck, binds the paw.

The mother and the warder, who have witnessed the whole scene from the hall above, are transported with delight. The lion is tamed and in safety; and, as the child, to soothe the monster, alternates with the sounds of his flute his charming pious songs, he concludes the whole novel by singing the following verses:

Holy angels thus take heed
  Of the good and docile child,
Aiding ev'ry worthy deed,
  Checking ev'ry impulse wild.
Pious thoughts and melody
  Both together work for good,
Luring to the infant's knee
  E'en the tyrant of the wood.[1]

I had not read without emotion the concluding incident. Still I did not know what to say. I was astonished but not satisfied. It seemed to me that the conclusion was too simple,[2] too ideal, too lyrical; and that at least some of the other figures should have reappeared, and, by winding up the whole, have given more breadth to the termination. Goethe observed that I had a doubt in my mind, and endeavoured to set me right. Said he, "If I had again brought in some of the other figures at the end, the conclusion would have been prosaic. What could they do and say, when everything is done already? The prince and his men have ridden into the town, where his assistance is needed. Honorio, as soon as he learns that the lion is secured, will follow with his hunters; and the man will soon come from the town with his iron cage and put the lion into it. All these things are foreseen, and therefore should not be detailed. If they were, we should become prosaic. It was necessary that the conclusion should be ideal, lyrical; for, after the pathetic speech of the man, which in itself is poetical prose, a further elevation is required, and I was obliged to have recourse to lyrical poetry—even to a song.

"As a similitude for this novel," continued Goethe, "imagine a green plant shooting up from its root, thrusting forth strong green leaves from the sides of its sturdy stem, and at last terminating in a flower. The flower is unexpected and startling, but come it must—nay, the whole foliage has existed only for the sake of that flower, and would be worthless without it.

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[1] Those who know the difficulty of the original will not be too severe on the above translation. The words as they stand in Cotta's editions of Goethe are as follows:

Und so geht mit guten Kindern
  Sel'ger Engel gern zu Rath,
Böses Willen zu verhindern,
  Zu befördern schöne That.
So beschwören fest zu bannen
  Lieben Sohn ans zarte Knie
Ihn des Waldes Hochtyrannen
  Frommer Sinn und Melodie.

Unless the most forced construction be adopted, these lines seem to me quite inexplicable. But in the passage as quoted by Eckermann, "liebem" stands in the place of "lieben"; and this reading, which I suspect to be the right one, gives a sense to which my version approximates.—J. O.

[2] In the sense of a group being *simple*. The German word is "einsam" (solitary).—J. O.

"The purpose of this novel was to show how the unmanageable and the invincible is often better restrained by love and pious feeling than by force. And this beautiful aim, set forth by the child and the lion, charmed me on to the completion of the work. This is the ideal—this is the flower. The green foliage of the extremely real introduction is only there for the sake of this ideal, and only worth anything on account of it. For what is the real in itself? We take delight in it when it is represented with truth—nay, it may give us a clearer knowledge of certain things; but the proper gain to our higher nature lies alone in the ideal, which proceeds from the heart of the poet."

[Eckermann signified approval.]

"I am glad," said Goethe, "that you are satisfied with it; and I am also glad on my own account, that I have got rid of a subject carried about with me for thirty years. Schiller and Humboldt, to whom I formerly communicated my plan, dissuaded me from going on with it, because they could see nothing in it and because the poet alone knows what charms he is capable of giving to his subject. Never ask anybody, if you mean to write anything. If Schiller had asked me about his *Wallenstein* before he had written it, I should surely have advised him against it; for I could never have dreamed that from such a subject so excellent a drama could be made. Schiller was opposed to that treatment of my subject in hexameters to which I was inclined immediately after my *Hermann and Dorothea*, and advised Ottava Rima. You see, however, that I have succeeded, but with prose; for much depended on an accurate description of the locality, and in this I should have been constrained by a verse of the sort recommended. Besides the very real character at the beginning, and the very ideal character at the conclusion of the novel, tell best in prose; while the little songs have a pretty effect, which could not be produced either by hexameters or by Ottava Rima."

The single tales and novels of the *Wanderjahre* were talked of; and it was observed that each was distinguished from the others in character and tone. "The reason is," said Goethe, "I went to work like a painter, who, with certain subjects, shuns certain colours, and makes others predominate. Thus, for a morning landscape, he puts a great deal of blue on his palette, and but little yellow. But, if he is to paint an evening scene, he takes a great deal of yellow, and almost omits the blue. I proceeded in the same way with my different literary productions."

I then, especially with reference to this last novel, admired the detail of scenery.

"I have never observed Nature with a view to poetical production," said Goethe; "but, because my early drawing of landscapes, and my later studies in natural science, led me to a constant close observation, I have gradually learned Nature by heart to the minutest details—so that, when I need anything as a poet, it is at my command; and I cannot easily sin against truth. Schiller had not this observation of Nature. The localities of Switzerland which he used in *William Tell* were all related to him by me; but he had such a wonderful mind that even on hearsay he could make something that possessed reality.

"Schiller's proper productive talent lay in the ideal; and it may be said he has not his equal in German or any other literature. He has almost everything Lord Byron has; but Lord Byron is his superior in knowledge of the world. I wish Schiller had lived to know Lord Byron's works; I wonder what he would have said to so congenial a mind. Did Byron publish anything during Schiller's life?"

I could not say. Goethe took down the *Conversations Lexicon*, and read the article on Byron, making many cursory remarks. It appeared Byron had published nothing before 1807, and therefore Schiller could have seen nothing of his.

"Through all Schiller's works," continued Goethe, "goes the idea of freedom; though this idea assumed a new shape as Schiller advanced in his culture and became another man. In his youth, physical freedom occupied him and influenced his poems; in his later life, ideal freedom.

"Freedom is an odd thing, and every man has enough of it if he only knew how to be satisfied and settled. What avails a superfluity of freedom which we cannot use? Look at this chamber, and the next—in which, through the open door, you see my bed. Neither of them is large; and they are rendered still narrower by furniture, books, manuscripts, and works of art; but they are enough for me. I have lived in them all the winter, scarcely entering my front rooms. What have I had out of my spacious house and the liberty of going from one room to another, when I have not needed to use them?

"If a man has freedom enough to live healthily, and to work at his craft, he has enough; and so much all can easily obtain. Then all of us are only free under certain conditions, which we must fulfil. The citizen is as free as the nobleman, when he restrains himself within the limits God appointed by placing him in that rank. The nobleman is as free as the prince; for, if he will but observe a few ceremonies at court, he may feel himself his equal. Freedom consists not in refusing to recognize anything above us, but in respecting something which is above us; for, by respecting it, we raise ourselves to it, and, by our very acknowledgment, prove that we bear within ourselves what is higher, and are worthy to be on a level with it.

"I have, on my journeys, often met merchants from the north of Germany, who fancied they were my equals if they rudely seated themselves next me at table. They were, by this method, nothing of the kind; but they would have been so if they had known how to value and treat me.

"That this physical freedom gave Schiller so much trouble in his youthful years, was caused partly by the nature of his mind, but still more by the restraint he endured at the military school. In later days, when he had enough physical freedom, he passed over to the ideal; and I would almost say that this idea killed him, since it led him to make excessive demands on his physical nature.

"The Grand Duke fixed on Schiller, when he was established here, an income of one thousand dollars yearly, and offered to give him twice as much in case he should be hindered by sickness from working. Schiller never availed himself of this last offer. 'I have talent,' said he, 'and must help myself.' But, as his family enlarged of late years, he was obliged for a livelihood to write two dramas annually; and to accomplish this he forced himself to write days and weeks when he was not well. He would have his talent obey him at any hour. He never drank much—he was very temperate; but, in such hours of bodily weakness, he was obliged to use spirituous liquors. This impaired his health, and his productions. The faults some wiseacres find in his works I deduce from this. All the passages that they say are not what they ought to be I would call pathological passages; for he wrote them on those days when he had not strength to find the right motives. I have every respect for the categorical imperative. I know how much good may proceed from it; but, carried too far, this idea of ideal freedom leads to no good."

Amid these interesting remarks, and similar discourse: on Lord Byron; and the celebrated German authors, of whom Schiller had said, that he liked Kotzebue best, for he, at any rate, produced something: the hours of evening passed, and Goethe gave me the novel that I might study it at home.

Sunday evening, January 21, 1827.

I went at half-past seven this evening to Goethe, and stayed with him about an hour. He showed me a volume of new French poems, by Mademoiselle Gay, and spoke of them with great praise.

"The French," said he, "push their way, and it is well worth while to look after them. I have lately been striving hard to form a notion of the present state of French literature; and if I succeed I shall express my opinion of it. There are now at work with them, for the first time, those elements that we went through long ago.

"A mediocre talent is indeed always biassed by its epoch, and must be fed by the elements of the age. With the French it is the same as with us, down to the most modern pietism, only that with them this appears more *galant* and *spirituel*."

"What says your excellency to Béranger, and the author of *Clara Gazul*?"

"Those I except," said Goethe; "they are great geniuses, who have a foundation in themselves and keep free from their time's mode of thinking."

"I am glad to hear you say this," said I, "for I have had a similar feeling about them both."

The conversation turned from French to German literature. "I will show you something," said Goethe, "that will be interesting to you. Give me one of those two volumes before you. Solger is known to you?"

"Certainly," said I; "I have his translation of Sophocles, and both this and the preface gave me long since a high opinion of him."

"You know he has been dead several years," said Goethe; "and now a collection of the writings and letters he left is published. He is not so happy in his philosophical inquiries, which he has given us in the form of the Platonic dialogues; but his letters are excellent. In one of them, he writes to Tieck upon the *Wahlverwandtschaften* (Elective Affinities), and

I wish to read it to you; for it would not be easy to say anything better about that novel."

Goethe read me these excellent remarks, and we talked them over point by point, admiring the dignity of the views, and the logical sequence of the reasoning. Although Solger admitted that the facts of the *Wahlverwandtschaften* had their germ in the nature of all the characters, he nevertheless blamed that of Edward.

"I do not quarrel with him," said Goethe, "for being unable to endure Edward. I myself cannot endure him, but was obliged to make him such a man in order to bring out my fact. He is, besides, very true to nature; for you find many people in the higher ranks like him, with whom obstinacy takes the place of character.

"High above all, Solger placed the Architect; because, while all the other persons of the novel show themselves loving and weak, he alone remains strong and free; and the beauty of his nature consists not so much in his not falling into the errors of the other characters, as in the poet's having made him so noble that he *could* not fall into them. That is really very fine."

"I have," said I, "felt the importance and amiability of the Architect's character; but I had never remarked that his excellence was that by his very nature he could not fall into those bewilderments of love."

"No wonder," said Goethe, "for I myself never thought of it when I was creating him; yet Solger is right—this certainly is his character.

"These remarks," continued he, "were written as early as the year 1809. I should then have been much cheered to hear so kind a word about the *Wahlverwandtschaften*; for at that time, and afterwards, not many pleasant remarks were vouchsafed me about that novel.

"I see from these letters that Solger was much attached to me: in one of them, he complains that I have returned no answer about the Sophocles he sent me. Good heavens! how am I placed! It is not to be wondered at. I have known great lords, to whom many presents were sent. These had certain formulas and phrases with which they answered everything; and thus they wrote letters to hundreds, all alike, and all mere phrases. This I never could do. If I could not say to each man something distinct and appropriate to the occasion, I preferred not writing at all. I esteemed superficial phrases unworthy, and thus I have failed to answer many an excellent man to whom I would willingly have written. You see yourself how it is with me, and what messages and dispatches daily flow in upon me from every quarter; and you must confess that more than one man's life would be required to answer all these, in ever so careless a way. But I am sorry about Solger; he was an admirable being, and deserved a friendly answer better than many."

I turned the conversation to the novel, which I had now frequently read at home. "All the first part," said I, "is only an introduction, but nothing is set forth beyond what is necessary; and this necessary preliminary is executed with such grace, that we cannot fancy it is only for the sake of something else, but would give it a value of its own."

"I am glad that you feel this," said Goethe, "but I must do something yet. According to the laws of a good introduction, the proprietors of the animals must make their appearance in it. When the princess and the uncle ride by the booth, the people must come out and entreat the princess to honour it with a visit." "You are right," said I; "for, since all the rest is indicated in the introduction, so must these people be; and it is perfectly natural that, with their devotion to their treasury, they would not let the princess pass unassailed."

"You see," said Goethe, "that in a work of this kind, even when it is finished as a whole, there is still something to be done."

Goethe then told me of a foreigner who had lately visited him and had talked of translating several of his works.

"He is a good man," said Goethe; "but, as to literature, he shows himself a mere dilettante; for he does not yet know German at all, and is already talking of the translations he will make and of the portraits he will prefix to them. That is the very nature of the dilettanti: they have no idea of the difficulties in a subject, and always wish to undertake something for which they have no capacity."

Thursday, January 25, 1827.

At seven o'clock I went with the manuscript of the novel and a copy of Béranger to Goethe. I found M. Soret in conversation with him upon modern French literature. I listened with interest, and it was observed that the modern writers had learned a great deal from De Lille, as far as good versification was concerned. Since M. Soret, a native of Geneva, did not speak German fluently, while Goethe talks French tolerably well, the conversation was carried on in French, and only became German when I put in a word. I took my Béranger out of my pocket, and gave it to Goethe, who wished to read his admirable songs again. M. Soret thought the portrait prefixed to the poems was not a good likeness. Goethe was much pleased to have this beautiful copy in his hands.

"These songs," said he, "may be looked upon as perfect, the best things in their kind—especially when you observe the burden; without which they would be almost too earnest, too pointed, and too epigrammatic, for songs. Béranger reminds me ever of Horace and Hafiz; who stood in the same way above their times, satirically and playfully setting forth the corruption of manners. Béranger has the same relation to his contemporaries; but, as he belongs to the lower class, the licentious and vulgar are not very hateful to him, and he treats them with a sort of partiality."

Many similar remarks were made upon Béranger and other modern French writers; till M. Soret went to court, and I remained alone with Goethe.

A sealed packet lay upon the table. Goethe laid his hand upon it. "This," said he, "is *Helena*, which is going to Cotta to be printed."

I felt the importance of the moment. For, as it is with a newly-built vessel on its first going to sea, whose destiny is hid from us, so is it with the intellectual creation of a great master, going forth into the world.

"I have till now," said Goethe, "been always finding little things to add or to touch up; but I must finish, and I am glad it is going to the post, so that I can turn to something else. Let it meet its fate. My comfort is, the general culture of Germany stands at an incredibly high point; so I need not fear such a production will long remain misunderstood and without effect."

"There is a whole antiquity in it," said I.

"Yes," said Goethe, "the philologists will find work."

"I have no fear," said I, "about the antique part; for there we have the most minute detail, the most thorough development of individuals, and each personage says just what he should. But the modern romantic part is very difficult, for half the history of the world lies behind it; the material is so rich that it can only be lightly indicated, and heavy demands are made upon the reader."

"Yet," said Goethe, "it all appeals to the senses, and on the stage would satisfy the eye: more I did not intend. Let the crowd of spectators take pleasure in the spectacle; the higher import will not escape the initiated—as with the *Magic Flute* and other things."

"It will produce a most unusual effect on the stage," said I, "that a piece should begin as a tragedy and end as an opera. But something is required to represent the grandeur of these persons, and to speak the sublime language and verse."

"The first part," said Goethe, "requires the first tragic artists; and the operatic part must be sustained by the first vocalists, male and female. That of Helena ought to be played, not by one, but by two great female artists; for we seldom find that a fine vocalist has sufficient talent as a tragic actress."

"The whole," said I, "will furnish an occasion for great splendour of scenery and costume. I look forward to its representation. If we could only get a good composer."

"It should be one," said Goethe, "who, like Meyerbeer, has lived long in Italy, so that he combines his German nature with the Italian style and manner. However, that will be found somehow or other; I only rejoice that I am rid of it. Of the notion that the chorus does not descend into the lower world, but rather disperses itself among the elements on the cheerful surface of the earth, I am not a little proud."

"It is a new sort of immortality," said I.

"Now," continued Goethe, "how do you go on with the novel?"

"I have brought it with me," said I. "After reading it again, I find that your excellency must not make the intended alteration. It produces a good effect that the people first appear by the slain tiger as completely new beings, with their outlandish costume and manners, and announce themselves as the owners of the beasts. If you made them first appear in the introduction, this effect would be completely weakened, if not destroyed."

"You are right," said Goethe; "I must leave it as it is. It must have been my design, when first I planned the tale, not to bring the people in sooner. The intended alteration was a requisition on the part of the understanding, which would certainly have led me into a fault. This is a remarkable case in æsthetics, that a rule must be departed from if faults are to be avoided."

We talked over the naming of the novel. Many titles were proposed; some suited the beginning, others the end—but none seemed exactly suitable to the whole.

"I'll tell you what," said Goethe, "we will call it *The Novel* (Die Novelle); for what is a novel but a peculiar and as yet unheard-of event? This is the proper meaning of this name; and many a thing that in Germany passes as a novel is no novel at all, but a mere narrative or whatever else you like to call it. In that original sense of an unheard-of event, even the *Wahlverwandtschaften* may be called a 'novel.'"

"A poem," said I, "has always originated without a title, and is that which it is without a title; so the title is not really essential to the matter."

"It is not," said Goethe; "the ancient poems had no titles; but this is a custom of the moderns, from whom also the poems of the ancients obtained titles at a later period. This custom is the result of a necessity to name things and to distinguish them from each other, when a literature becomes extensive. Here you have something new;—read it."

He handed to me a translation by Herr Gerhard of a Serbian poem. It was very beautiful, and the translation so simple and clear that there was no disturbance in the contemplation of the object. It was entitled *The Prison-Key*. I say nothing of the course of the action, except that the conclusion seemed to me abrupt and rather unsatisfactory.

"That," said Goethe, "is the beauty of it; for it thus leaves a sting in the heart, and the imagination of the reader is excited to devise every possible case that can follow. The conclusion leaves untold the material for a whole tragedy, but of a kind that has often been done already. On the contrary, that which is set forth in the poem is really new and beautiful; and the poet acted very wisely in delineating this alone and leaving the rest to the reader. I would willingly insert the poem in *Kunst und Alterthum*, but it is too long: on the other hand, I have asked Herr Gerhard to give me these three in rhyme, which I shall print in the next number. What do you say to this? Only listen."

Goethe read first the song of the old man who loves a young maiden, then the women's drinking song, and finally that animated one beginning "Dance for us, Theodore." He read them admirably, each in a different tone and manner.

We praised Herr Gerhard for having in each instance chosen the most appropriate versification and burden, and for having executed all in such an easy and perfect manner. "There you see," said Goethe, "what technical practice does for such a talent as Gerhard's; and it is fortunate for him that he has no actual literary profession, but one that daily takes him into practical life. He has, moreover, travelled much in England and other countries; and thus, with his sense for the actual, he has many advantages over our learned young poets.

"If he confines himself to making good translations, he is not likely to produce anything bad; but original inventions demand a great deal, and are difficult matters."

Some reflections were here made upon the productions of our newest young poets, and it was remarked that scarce one of them had come out with good prose. "That is very easily explained," said Goethe: "to write prose, one must have something to say; but he who has nothing to say can still make verses and rhymes, where one word suggests the other, and at last something comes out which in fact is nothing but looks as if it were something."

Wednesday, January 31, 1827.

Dined with Goethe. "Within the last few days, since I saw you," said he, "I have read many things; especially a Chinese novel, which occupies me still and seems to me very remarkable."

"Chinese novel!" said I; "that must look strange enough."

"Not so much as you might think," said Goethe; "the Chinamen think, act, and feel almost exactly like us; and we soon find that we are perfectly like them, except that all they do is more clear, pure, and decorous, than with us.

"With them all is orderly, citizen-like, without great passion or poetic flight; and there is a strong resemblance to my *Hermann and Dorothea,* as well as to the English novels of Richardson. They likewise differ from us in that with them external nature is always associated with the human figures. You always hear the goldfish splashing in the pond, the birds are always singing on the bough; the day is always serene and sunny, the night is always clear. There is much talk about the moon; but it does not alter the landscape, its light is conceived to be as bright as day itself; and the interior of the houses is as neat and elegant as their pictures. For instance, 'I heard the lovely girls laughing, and when I got sight of them they were sitting on cane chairs.' There you have, at once, the prettiest situation; for cane chairs are necessarily associated with the greatest lightness and elegance. Then there is an infinite number of legends which are constantly introduced into the narrative and are applied almost like proverbs: as, for instance, one of a girl who was so light and graceful in the feet that she could balance herself on a flower without breaking it; and then another, of a young man so virtuous and brave that in his thirtieth year he had the honour to talk with the Emperor; then there is another of two lovers who showed such great purity during a long acquaintance that, when they were on one occasion obliged to pass the night in the same chamber, they occupied the time with conversation and did not approach one another.

"There are innumerable other legends, all turning upon what is moral and proper. It is by this severe moderation in everything that the Chinese Empire has sustained itself for thousands of years, and will endure hereafter.

"I find a highly remarkable contrast to this Chinese novel in the *Chansons de Béranger*, which have, almost every one, some immoral licentious subject for their foundation, and which would be extremely odious to me if managed by a genius inferior to Béranger; he, however, has made them not only tolerable, but pleasing. Tell me yourself, is it not remarkable that the subjects of the Chinese poet should be so thoroughly moral, and those of the first French poet of the present day be exactly the contrary?"

"Such a talent as Béranger's," said I, "would find no field in moral subjects."

"You are right," said Goethe; "the very perversions of his time have revealed and developed his better nature."

"But," said I, "is this Chinese romance one of their best?"

"By no means," said Goethe; "the Chinese have thousands of them, and had when our forefathers were still living in the woods.

"I am more and more convinced," he continued, "that poetry is the universal possession of mànkind, revealing itself everywhere and at all times in hundreds and hundreds of men. One makes it a little better than another, and swims on the surface a little longer than another—that is all. Herr von Matthisson must not think he is the man, nor must I think that I am the man; but each must say to himself, that the gift of poetry is by no means so very rare, and that nobody need think very much of himself because he has written a good poem.

"But, really, we Germans are very likely to fall too easily into this pedantic conceit, when we do not look beyond the narrow circle that surrounds us. I therefore like to look about me in foreign nations, and advise everyone to do the same. National literature is now rather an unmeaning term; the epoch of World-literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach. But, while we thus value what is foreign, we must not bind ourselves to some particular thing, and regard it as a model. We must not give this value to the Chinese, or the Serbian, or Calderon, or the *Nibelungen*; but, if we really want a pattern, we must always return to the ancient Greeks, in whose works the beauty of mankind is constantly represented. All the rest we must look at only historically; appropriating to ourselves what is good, so far as it goes."

The bells of passing sledges allured us to the window, as we expected that the long procession which went out to Belvidere this morning would return about this time.

We talked of Alexander Manzoni; and Goethe told me that Count Reinhard not long since saw Manzoni at Paris—where, as a young author of celebrity, he had been well received in society—and that he was now living happily on his estate in the neighbourhood of Milan, with a young family and his mother.

"Manzoni," continued he, "wants nothing except to know what a good poet he is, and what rights belong to him as such. He has too much respect for history, and on this account is always adding notes to his pieces, in which he shows how faithful he has been to detail. Now, though his facts may be historical, his characters are not so—any more than my Thoas and Iphigenia. No poet has ever known the historical characters he has painted; if he had, he could scarcely have made use of them. The poet must know what effects he wishes to produce, and regulate the nature of his characters accordingly. If I had tried to make Egmont as history represents him, the father of a dozen children, his light-minded proceedings would have appeared very absurd. I needed an Egmont more in harmony with his own actions and my poetic views; and this is, as Clara says, *my* Egmont.

"What would be the use of poets, if they only repeated the record of the historian? The poet must go further, and give us if possible something higher and better. All the characters of Sophocles bear something of that great poet's lofty soul; and it is the same with the characters of Shakespeare. This is as it ought to be. Nay, Shakespeare goes further, and makes his Romans Englishmen; and there too he is right; for otherwise his nation would not have understood him.

"Here, again," continued Goethe, "the Greeks were so great that they regarded fidelity to historic facts less than the treatment of them by the poet. We have fortunately a fine example in Philoctetes; which subject has been treated by all three of the great tragedians, and lastly and best by Sophocles. This poet's excellent play has luckily come down to us entire; while of the *Philoctetes* of Æschylus and Euripides only fragments have been found, although sufficient to show how they have managed the subject. If time permitted, I would restore these pieces, as I did the *Phaethon* of Euripides; it would be to me no unpleasant or useless task.

"In this subject the problem was very simple: namely, to bring Philoctetes with his bow from the island of Lemnos. But the manner of doing this was the business of the poet; and here each could show the power of his invention, and one could excel another. Ulysses must fetch him; but shall he be known by Philoctetes or not? and if not, how shall he be disguised? Shall Ulysses go alone, or shall he have companions, and who shall they be? In Æschylus, there is no companion; in Euripides, it is Diomed; in Sophocles, the son of Achilles. Then, in what situation is Philoctetes to be found? Shall the island be inhabited or not? and, if inhabited, shall any sympathetic soul have taken compassion on him or not? And so with a hundred other things; which are all at the discretion of the poet, and in the selection and omission of which one may show his superiority to another in wisdom. Here is the grand point, and our present poets should do like the ancients. They should not be always asking whether a subject has been used before, and look to south and north for unheard-of adventures; which are often barbarous enough, and merely make an impression as incidents. To make something of a simple subject by a masterly treatment requires intellect and great talent, and these we do not find."

Some passing sledges again allured us to the window; but it was not the expected train from Belvidere. We laughed and talked about trivial matters, and then I asked Goethe how the novel was going on.

"I have not touched it of late," said he; "but one incident more must take place in the introduction.[1] The lion must roar as the princess passes the booth; upon which some good remarks may be made on the formidable nature of this mighty beast."

"That is a very happy thought," said I; "for thus you gain an introduction that is not only good and essential in its place but also gives a greater effect to all that follows. Hitherto the lion has appeared almost too gentle, shown no trace of ferocity;

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[1] "Introduction" is Oxenford's translation of the not-very-German word "exposition."

but by roaring he at least makes us suspect how formidable he is, and the effect when he gently follows the boy's flute is heightened."

"This mode of altering and improving," said Goethe, "where by continued invention the imperfect is heightened to the perfect, is the right one. But the remaking and carrying further what is already complete—as, for instance, Walter Scott has done with my 'Mignon,'[1] whom, in addition to her other qualities, he makes deaf and dumb—this mode of altering I cannot commend."

Thursday evening, February 1, 1827.

Goethe told me of a visit the Crown Prince of Prussia had been making him in company with the Grand Duke. "The princes Charles and William of Prussia," said he, "were also with me this morning. The Crown Prince and Grand Duke stayed nearly three hours, and we had talk about many things, which gave me a high opinion of the intellect, taste, knowledge, and way of thinking of these young princes."

Goethe had a volume of the *Theory of Colours* before him. "I still," said he, "owe you an answer with respect to the phenomenon of the coloured shadows; but as this presupposes a great deal, and is connected with much besides, I will not give you an explanation detached from the rest, but rather think it would be better if, on the evenings when we meet, we read through the whole *Theory of Colours* together. Thus we shall always have a solid subject for discourse; and you yourself will have made the whole theory so much your own that you will hardly know how you have come by it. What you have already learned begins to live and to be productive within you; and hence I foresee this science will soon be your own property. Now read the first section."

With these words Goethe laid the open book before me. I read the first paragraph respecting the physiological colours.

"You see," said Goethe, "that there is nothing without us that is not also within us; and that the eye, like the external world, has its colours. Since a great point in this science is the decided separation of the objective from the subjective, I have properly begun with the colours belonging to the eye; that in all our perceptions we may accurately distinguish whether a colour really exists outside ourselves, or whether it is only a seeming colour produced by the eye itself. I think that I have

[1] This allusion is to Fenella in *Peveril of the Peak*.—J.O.

begun at the right end, by first disposing of the organ by means of which all our perceptions and observations must take place."

I read on as far as those interesting paragraphs where it is taught that the eye has need of change; since it never willingly dwells on the same colour, but always requires another—and that so urgently that it produces colours itself if it does not actually find them.

This remark led our conversation to a great law, which pervades all nature and on which all life and all the joy of life depend. "This," said Goethe, "is the case not only with all our other senses, but also with our higher spiritual nature; and it is because the eye is so eminent a sense that this law of required change (*Gesetz des geforderten Wechsels*) is so striking and so especially clear with respect to colours. We have dances that please us in a high degree on account of the alternation of major and minor, while dances in only one of these modes weary us at once."

"The same law," said I, "seems to lie at the foundation of a good style, where we like to avoid a sound we have just heard. Even on the stage a great deal might be done with this law, if it were well applied. Plays, especially tragedies, in which a uniform tone prevails, are always somewhat wearisome; and if the orchestra plays melancholy depressing music during the *entr'actes* of a melancholy piece, we are tortured and would escape by all possible means."

"Perhaps," said Goethe, "the lively scenes introduced into Shakespeare's plays rest upon this 'law of required change'; but it does not seem applicable to the higher tragedy of the Greeks, where a certain fundamental tone pervades the whole."

"The Greek tragedy," said I, "is not of such a length as to be rendered wearisome by one pervading tone. Then there is an interchange of chorus and dialogue; and the sublime sense is of such a kind that it cannot become fatiguing, since a genuine reality, always of a cheerful nature, lies at the foundation."

"You may be right," said Goethe; "and it would be well worth the trouble to investigate how far the Greek tragedy is subject to the general 'law of required change.' You see how all things are connected with each other, and how a law respecting the theory of colours can lead to an inquiry into Greek tragedy. We must only take care not to push such a law too far, and make it the foundation for much besides. We shall go more safely if we only apply it by analogy."

We talked of the manner in which Goethe had set forth his theory of colours—deducing the whole from great fundamental laws, and always referring to these the single phenomena; by which method he had made it very comprehensible.

"This may be so," said Goethe, "and you may praise me on that account; nevertheless, the method requires students who do not live amid distractions, and are capable of getting to the bottom of the matter. Some very clever people have been imbued with my theory of colours; but unfortunately they do not adhere to the straight path—before I am aware of it, they turn aside and follow an idea instead of keeping their eyes properly fixed on the object. Nevertheless, a good head-piece, when really seeking the truth, can always do a great deal."

We talked about the professors who, after they had found a better theory, still talked of Newton's. "This is not to be wondered at," said Goethe: "such people continue in error because they are indebted to it for their existence. They would otherwise have to learn everything over again, and that would be very inconvenient." "But," said I, "how can their experiments prove the truth when the basis of their doctrine is false?" "They do *not* prove the truth," said Goethe, "nor is such the intention; the only point with these professors is to prove their own opinion. On this account, they conceal all experiments that would reveal the truth and show their doctrine was untenable. Then, the scholars—what do they care for the truth? They, like the rest, are perfectly satisfied if they can prate away empirically; that is the whole matter. Men are peculiar: as soon as a lake is frozen over, they flock to it by hundreds and amuse themselves on the smooth surface; but which of them thinks of inquiring how deep it is and what sort of fish are swimming about under the ice? Niebuhr has just discovered a very ancient commercial treaty between Rome and Carthage, from which it appears that all Livy's history respecting the early condition of the Roman people is a mere fable and that Rome at a very early period was in a far higher state of civilization than Livy represents; but if you imagine that this treaty will occasion a great reform in the teaching of Roman history, you are mistaken. Think of the frozen lake. I have learned to know mankind: thus it is, and not otherwise." [1]

"Nevertheless," said I, "you cannot repent of having written your theory of colours, since you have not only laid a firm foundation for this excellent science but also produced a model of scientific treatment which can always be followed in the treatment of similar subjects."

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[1] Compare this with the passage footnoted under date October 12, 1825.

"I do not repent it at all," said Goethe, "though I have expended half a life upon it. Perhaps I might have written half a dozen tragedies more; that is all, and people enough will come after me to do that.

"After all, you are right; I think, the treatment of the subject is good, there is method in it. I have also written a musical theory, and my metamorphosis of plants is based on the same method of observation and deduction.

"I came to my metamorphosis of plants as Herschel came to his discoveries. Herschel was so poor that he could not buy a telescope but was obliged to make one for himself. In this he was lucky; for the home-made telescope was better than any other, and with it he made his great discoveries. I came to botany by the empirical road. I now know well enough that with respect to the formation of the sexes the theory went so far into detail that I had not courage to grasp it. This impelled me to pursue the subject in my own way, and to find that which was common to all plants without distinction; thus I discovered the law of metamorphosis.

"To pursue botany further in detail is not my purpose; I leave that to my superiors in the matter. My only concern was to reduce the phenomena to a general fundamental law.

"Mineralogy has interested me for two reasons only: first, I valued it for its great practical utility; and then I thought to find a document elucidating the primary formation of the world, of which Werner's doctrine gave hopes. Since this science has been turned upside down by the death of that excellent man, I do not proceed further in it, but remain quiet with my own convictions.

"In the theory of colours, I have next to develop the formation of the rainbow: an extremely difficult problem; which, however, I hope to solve. On this account, I am glad to go through the theory of colours once more with you; since thus, especially with your interest for the subject, it becomes fresh again.

"I have," continued Goethe, "attempted natural science in nearly every department; nevertheless, my tendencies have always been confined to such objects as lay terrestrially around me and could be immediately perceived by the senses. On this account, I have never occupied myself with astronomy; because there the senses are not sufficient—instruments, calculations, and mechanics, which require a whole life, are needed, and were not in my line.

"If I have done anything with respect to the subjects that lay in my way, I had this advantage: that my life fell in a time richer than any other in great natural discoveries. As a child I became acquainted with Franklin's doctrine of electricity, the law of which he had just discovered. Thus through my whole life, down to the present hour, has one great discovery followed another; so that not only was I directed towards nature in my early years, but also my interest in it has been maintained ever since. Advances such as I could never have foreseen are now made even on paths that I opened; and I feel like one who walks towards the dawn, and, when the sun rises, is astonished at its brilliancy."

Among the Germans, Goethe here mentioned the names of Carus, D'Alton, and Meyer of Königsberg, with admiration.

"If," continued he, "when the truth was once found, people would not again pervert and obscure it, I should be satisfied; for mankind requires something positive, to be handed down from generation to generation, and it would be well if the positive were also the true. On this account, I should be glad if people came to a clear understanding in natural science, and then adhered to the truth; not *transcending* again after all had been done in the region of the comprehensible. But mankind cannot be at peace, and confusion always returns before we are aware.

"Thus they are now pulling to pieces the five books of Moses; and, if an annihilating criticism is injurious in anything, it is so in matters of religion—for here everything depends upon faith, to which we cannot return when we have once lost it.

"In poetry, an annihilating criticism is not so injurious. Wolf has demolished Homer, but he has not been able to injure the poem; for this poem has a miraculous power like the heroes of Walhalla, who hew one another to pieces in the morning, but sit down to dinner with whole limbs at noon.

"We will quietly keep to the right way, and let others go as they please."

Wednesday, February 7, 1827.

To-day Goethe spoke severely of certain critics, who were not satisfied with Lessing, and made unjust demands upon him. "When people," said he, "compare the pieces of Lessing with those of the ancients, and call them paltry and miserable, what do they mean? Rather pity the extraordinary man for being obliged to live in a pitiful time, which afforded him no better materials than are treated in his pieces; pity him, because in his *Minna von Barnhelm* he found nothing better to do than to meddle with the squabbles of Saxony and Prussia. His constant polemical turn, too, resulted from the badness of his time. In *Emilia Galeotti*, he vented his pique against princes; in *Nathan*, against the priests."

Friday, February 16, 1827.

I told Goethe that I had lately been reading Winckelmann's work upon the imitation of Greek works of art, and I confessed it often seemed to me Winckelmann was not perfectly clear about his subject.

"You are right," said Goethe; "we sometimes find him merely groping about; but, what is the great matter, his groping always leads to something. He is like Columbus, when he had not yet discovered the New World, yet had a presentiment of it in his mind. We learn nothing by reading him, but we *become* something.

"Now, Meyer has gone further, carried the knowledge of art to its highest point. His history of art is an immortal work; but he would not have become what he is, if, in his youth, he had not formed himself on Winckelmann, and walked in the path Winckelmann pointed out.

"You see once again what is done for a man by a great predecessor, and the advantage of making a proper use of him."

(Sup.) Wednesday, February 21, 1827.

Dined with Goethe. He spoke with admiration of Alexander von Humboldt; whose work on Cuba and Colombia he had begun to read, and whose views as to the project for making a passage through the Isthmus of Panama appeared to have a particular interest for him. "Humboldt," said Goethe, "has, with a great knowledge of his subject, given other points where, by making use of some streams that flow into the Gulf of Mexico, the end may be perhaps better attained than at Panama. All this is reserved for the future, and for an enterprising spirit. So much, however, is certain, that, if they succeed in cutting such a canal that ships of any burden and size can be navigated through it from the Mexican Gulf to the Pacific Ocean, innumerable benefits would result to the whole human race. But I should wonder if the United States were to let an opportunity of getting such a work into their own hands escape. It may be foreseen that this young state, with its decided predilection to the West, will, in thirty or forty years, have occupied and peopled the large tract of land beyond the Rocky Mountains. It may furthermore be foreseen that along the whole coast of the Pacific Ocean, where nature has already formed the most capacious and secure harbours, important commercial towns will gradually arise, for the furtherance of a great intercourse between China and the East Indies and the United States. In such a case, it would not only be desirable but almost necessary that a more rapid communication should be maintained between the eastern and western shores of North America, both by merchant-ships and by men-of-war, than has hitherto been possible with the tedious, disagreeable, and expensive voyage round Cape Horn. So I repeat, it is absolutely indispensable for the United States to effect a passage from the Mexican Gulf to the Pacific Ocean; and I am certain they will do it.

"Would that I might live to see it!—but I shall not. I should like to see another thing—a junction of the Danube and the Rhine. But this undertaking is so gigantic that I have doubts of its completion, particularly when I consider our German resources. And thirdly and lastly, I should wish to see England in possession of a canal through the Isthmus of Suez. Would I could live to see these three great works! it would be well worth the trouble to last some fifty years more for the purpose."

(Sup.) Thursday, March 1, 1827.

Dined with Goethe. He related to me that he had received a communication from Count Sternberg and Zauper, which had given him great pleasure. We then talked a great deal about the theory of colours, the subjective prismatic experiments, and the laws by which the rainbow is formed. He was pleased with my continually-increasing interest in these difficult subjects.

(Sup.) Wednesday, March 21, 1827.

Goethe showed me a little book, by Hinrichs, on the nature of antique tragedy. "I have read it with great interest," said he. "Hinrichs has taken the *Œdipus* and *Antigone* of Sophocles as the foundation whereon to develop his views. It is very remarkable; and I will lend it to you that you may read it, and that we may be able to converse upon it. I am by no means of his opinion; but it is highly instructive to see how a man of such thoroughly philosophical culture regards a poetical work of art from the point of view peculiar to his school.[1] I will say no more to-day, that I may not influence your opinion. Only read it, and you will find that it suggests all kinds of thoughts."

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[1] That of Hegel.—J. O.

(Sup.) Wednesday, March 28, 1827.

I brought back to Goethe the book by Hinrichs, which I had read attentively. I had also gone once more through all the plays of Sophocles, to be in complete possession of my subject.

"Now," said Goethe, "how did you like him? He attacks a matter well—does he not?"

"This book affected me very strangely," said I. "No other book has aroused so many thoughts in me as this; and yet there is none I have so often been disposed to contradict."

"That is exactly the point," said Goethe. "What we agree with leaves us inactive, but contradiction makes us productive."

"His intentions," said I, "appear to me in the highest degree laudable, and he by no means confines himself to the surface. But he so often loses himself in refinements and motives—and that in so subjective a manner—that he loses the true aspect of the subject in detail, as well as the survey of the whole; and in such a case it is necessary to do violence to both oneself and the theme to think as he does. Besides, I have often fancied that my organs were not fine enough to apprehend the unusual subtlety of his distinctions."

"If they were philosophically prepared like his," said Goethe, "it would be better. But, to speak frankly, I am sorry that a man of undoubted innate power from the northern coast of Germany, like Hinrichs, should be so spoilt by the philosophy of Hegel as to lose all unbiassed and natural observation and thought, and gradually to get into an artificial and heavy style, of both thought and expression; so that we find passages in his book where our understanding comes to a standstill, and we no longer know what we are reading."

"I have fared no better," said I. "Still I have rejoiced to meet with some passages that appeared perfectly clear and fitted for mankind in general; such, for instance, as his relation of the fable of Œdipus."

"Here," said Goethe, "he has been obliged to confine himself strictly to his subject. But there are in his book several passages in which the thought does not progress, but in which the obscure language constantly moves on the same spot and in the same circle, just like the 'Einmaleins'[1] of the witch in my *Faust*.

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[1] This word, which signifies "multiplication table," refers to the arithmetical jargon uttered by the witch in her kitchen.—J. O.

Give me the book again. Of his sixth lecture upon the chorus, I scarcely understood anything. What do you say, for instance, to this passage, which occurs near the end:

"'This realization [i.e. of popular life] is, as the true signification thereof,[1] on this account alone its true realization; which, as a truth and certainty to itself, therefore constitutes the universally mental certainty; which certainly is at the same time the atoning certainty of the chorus; so that in this certainty alone, which has shown itself as the result of the combined movement of the tragic action, the chorus preserves its fitting relation to the universal popular consciousness, and in this capacity does not merely represent the people, but is that people according to its certainty.'

"I think we have had enough of this. What must the English and French think of the language of our philosophers, when we Germans do not understand them ourselves?" "And in spite of all this," said I, "we both agree that a noble purpose lies at the foundation of the book, and that it possesses the quality of awakening thoughts."

"His idea of the relation between family and state," said Goethe, "and the tragical conflicts that may arise from them, is certainly good and suggestive; yet I cannot allow that it is the only right one, or even the best for tragic art. We are indeed all members both of a family and of a state, and there does not often befall us a tragical fate that does not wound us in both capacities. Still, we might be very good tragical characters, if we were merely members of a family or merely members of a state. For, after all, the only point is to get a conflict that admits of no solution; and this may arise from an antagonistic position in any relation whatever—provided a person has a really natural foundation, and is himself really tragic. Thus Ajax falls a victim to the demon of wounded honour, and Hercules to the demon of jealousy. In neither of these cases is there the least conflict between family piety and political virtue; though this, according to Hinrichs, should be the element of Greek tragedy."

"Clearly," said I, "in this theory he merely had *Antigone* in his mind. He also appears to have had before him merely the character and mode of action of this heroine: as he makes the assertion that family piety appears most pure in woman, and especially a sister; and that a sister can love only a brother with perfect purity, and without sexual feeling."

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[1] The word "derselben," in the passage as cited, seems to want an antecedent. The reader is requested not to be too critical with this almost unreadable passage, which Goethe only refers to as an instance of obscurity.—J. O.

"I should think," returned Goethe, "that the love of sister for sister was still more pure and unsexual. As if we did not know of numerous cases where the most sensual inclinations have existed between brother and sister, both knowingly and unknowingly!"

"You must have remarked generally," continued Goethe, "that Hinrichs, in considering Greek tragedy, sets out from the *idea*; and that he looks upon Sophocles as one who, in the invention and arrangement of his pieces, likewise set out from an idea, and regulated the sex and rank of his characters accordingly. But Sophocles, when he wrote his pieces, by no means started from an *idea*; he seized upon some ancient ready-made popular tradition in which a good idea existed, and then only thought of adapting it in the best manner for the theatre. The Atrides will not allow Ajax to be buried; but as in *Antigone* the sister struggles for the brother, so in *Ajax* the brother struggles for the brother. That the sister takes charge of the unburied Polyneices, and the brother takes charge of the fallen Ajax, is a contingent circumstance, and does not belong to the invention of the poet; but to the tradition, which the poet followed and was obliged to follow."

"What he says about Creon's conduct," replied I, "appears to be equally untenable. He tries to prove that, in prohibiting the burial of Polyneices, Creon acts from pure political virtue; and, since Creon is not merely a man but also a prince, he lays down the proposition that, as a man represents the tragic power of the state, this man can be no other than he who is himself the personification of the state itself—namely, the prince; and that of all persons the man as prince must be just that person who displays the greatest political virtue."

"These are assertions nobody will believe," returned Goethe with a smile. "Besides, Creon by no means acts out of political virtue, but from hatred towards the dead. When Polyneices endeavoured to reconquer his paternal inheritance, from which he had been forcibly expelled, he did not commit such a monstrous crime against the state that his death was insufficient, and that further punishment of the innocent corpse was required.

"An action should never be placed in the category of political virtue which is opposed to virtue in general. When Creon forbids the burial of Polyneices, and not only taints the air with the decaying corpse, but also affords opportunity for dogs and birds of prey to drag about pieces torn from the dead body and thus to defile the altars—an action so offensive to both gods and men is not politically virtuous, but a political crime. Besides, he has everybody in the play against him. He has the elders of the state, who form the chorus, against him; he has the people at large against him; he has Teiresias against him; he has his own family against him: but he hears not, and obstinately persists in his impiety; until he has brought to ruin all who belong to him, and is himself at last nothing but a shadow."

"And still," said I, "when we hear him speak, we cannot help believing he is somewhat in the right."

"That is the very thing," said Goethe, "in which Sophocles is a master; and in which consists the very life of the dramatic in general. His characters all possess this gift of eloquence, and know how to explain the motives for their action so convincingly that the hearer is almost always on the side of the last speaker.

"Evidently, in his youth, he enjoyed an excellent rhetorical education, by which he became trained to look for all the reasons and seeming reasons of things. Still, his great talent in this respect betrayed him into faults: he sometimes went too far. There is a passage in *Antigone* which I always look upon as a blemish, and I would give a great deal for an apt philologist to prove that it is interpolated and spurious. After the heroine has explained the noble motives for her action, and displayed the elevated purity of her soul, she at last, when she is led to death, brings forward a motive that is quite unworthy and almost borders upon the comic. She says that, if she had been a mother, she would not have done, either for her dead children or for her dead husband, what she has done for her brother. 'For,' says she, 'if my husband died I could have had another, and if my children died I could have had others by my new husband. But with my brother, the case is different. I cannot have another brother; for, since my mother and father are dead, there is nobody to beget one.'

"This is, at least, the bare sense of this passage, which in my opinion, when placed in the mouth of a heroine going to her death, disturbs the tragic tone and appears to me very far-fetched —to savour too much of dialectical calculation."

We conversed further upon Sophocles, remarking that in his pieces he always less considered a moral tendency than an apt treatment of the subject, particularly with regard to theatrical effect.

"I do not object," said Goethe, "to a dramatic poet having a moral influence in view; but, when the point is to bring his subject clearly and effectively before his audience, his moral purpose proves of little use, and he needs much more a faculty for delineation and a familiarity with the stage to know what to do and what to leave undone. If there be a moral in the subject, it will appear, and the poet has nothing to consider but the effective and artistic treatment of his subject. If a poet has as high a soul as Sophocles, his influence will always be moral, let him do what he will. Besides, he knew the stage, and understood his craft thoroughly."

"How well he knew the theatre," answered I, "and how much he had in view a theatrical effect, we see in his *Philoctetes*, and the great resemblance this piece bears to *Œdipus in Colonos*, in both arrangement and course of action.

"In each piece we see a hero in a helpless condition; both are old and suffering from bodily infirmities. Œdipus has at his side his daughter as a guide and a prop; Philoctetes has his bow. The resemblance is carried still further. Both have been thrust aside in their afflictions; but, when the oracle declares that victory can be obtained with their aid alone, endeavour is made to get them back; Ulysses comes to Philoctetes, Creon to Œdipus. Both begin their discourse with cunning and honeyed words; but when these are of no avail they use violence, and we see Philoctetes deprived of his bow, and Œdipus of his daughter."

"Such acts of violence," said Goethe, "give an opportunity for excellent altercations, and such situations of helplessness excited the emotions of the audience; on which account the poet, whose object it was to produce an effect upon the public, liked to introduce them. In order to strengthen this effect in the *Œdipus*, Sophocles brings him in as a weak old man—whereas, according to all circumstances, he must have been a man still in the prime of life. But, at this vigorous age, the poet could not have used him for his play; he would have produced no effect, and he therefore made him a weak, helpless old man."

"The resemblance to *Philoctetes*," continued I, "goes still further. The hero, in both pieces, does not act, but suffers. On the other hand, each of these passive heroes has two active characters against him. Œdipus has Creon and Polyneices, Philoctetes has Neoptolemus and Ulysses; two such opposing characters were necessary to discuss the subject on all sides, and to gain the necessary body and fulness for the piece."

"You might add," interposed Goethe, "that both pieces bear this further resemblance: we see in both the extremely effective situation of a happy change; since one hero, in his disconsolate situation, has his beloved daughter restored to him, and the other his no less beloved bow."

The happy conclusions of these two pieces are also similar; for both heroes are delivered from their sorrows: Œdipus is blissfully snatched away; and as for Philoctetes, we are forewarned by the oracle of his cure, before Troy, by Æsculapius.

"When we," continued Goethe, "for our modern purposes, wish to learn how to conduct ourselves upon the theatre, Molière is the man to whom we should apply. Do you know his *Malade Imaginaire*? There is a scene in it that, as often as I read the piece, appears to me the symbol of a perfect knowledge of the boards. I mean the scene where the Malade Imaginaire asks his little daughter Louison if there has not been a young man in the chamber of her eldest sister. Now, any other who did not understand his craft so well would have let the little Louison plainly tell the fact at once, and there would have been the end of the matter. But what various motives for delay are introduced by Molière into this examination, for the sake of life and effect! He first makes little Louison act as if she did not understand her father; then she denies that she knows anything; then, threatened with the rod, she falls down as if dead; then, when her father bursts out in despair, she springs up from her feigned swoon with roguish hilarity; and at last, little by little, she confesses all. My explanation can give you only a very meagre notion of the animation of the scene: read it yourself till you become thoroughly impressed with its theatrical worth, and you will confess there is more practical instruction in it than in all the theories in the world.

"I have known and loved Molière," continued Goethe, "from my youth, and have learned from him during my whole life. I never fail to read some of his plays every year, that I may keep up a constant intercourse with what is excellent. It is not merely the perfectly artistic treatment that delights me; it is the amiable nature, the highly-formed mind, of the poet. There is in him a grace and a feeling for the decorous, and a tone of good society, which his innate beautiful nature could only attain by daily intercourse with the most eminent men of his age. Of Menander, I only know the few fragments; but these give me so high an idea of him, that I look upon this great Greek as the only man who could be compared to Molière."

"I am happy," returned I, "to hear you speak so highly of Molière. This sounds a little different from Herr von Schlegel! I have to-day with great repugnance swallowed what he says of Molière in his lectures on dramatic poetry. He quite looks down upon him, as a vulgar buffoon who has only seen good society at a distance and whose business it was to invent all sorts of pleasantries for the amusement of his lord. In these low pleasantries, Schlegel admits he was most happy, but he stole the best of them. He was obliged to force himself into the higher school of comedy, and never succeeded in it."

"To a man like Schlegel," returned Goethe, "a genuine nature like Molière's is a veritable eyesore; he feels that he has nothing in common with him, he cannot endure him. The *Misanthrope*, which I read over and over again, as one of my favourite pieces, is repugnant to him; he is forced to praise *Tartuffe* a little, but he lets him down again as much as he can. Schlegel cannot forgive Molière for ridiculing the affectation of learned ladies; he probably feels, as one of my friends has remarked, that he himself would have been ridiculed if he had lived with Molière.

"It is not to be denied," continued Goethe, "that Schlegel knows a great deal: his extraordinary attainments and his extensive reading almost terrify. But this is not enough. All the learning in the world is still no judgment. His criticism is completely one-sided; because in all theatrical pieces he merely regards the skeleton of the plot and arrangement, and only points out small points of resemblance to great predecessors, without troubling himself in the least as to what the author brings forward of graceful life and the culture of a high soul. But of what use are all the arts of a talent, if we do not find in a theatrical piece an amiable or great personality in the author? This alone influences the cultivation of the people.

"I look upon the way Schlegel has treated the French drama as a sort of recipe for the formation of a bad critic, who is wanting in every organ for the veneration of excellence and who passes over a sound nature and a great character as if they were chaff and stubble."

"Shakespeare and Calderon, on the other hand," I replied, "he treats justly, and even with decided affection."

"Both," returned Goethe, "are of a kind that cannot be praised enough, although I should not have wondered if Schlegel had scornfully let them down also. He is also just to Æschylus and Sophocles; but this does not seem to arise so much from a lively conviction of their extraordinary merit as from the tradition among philologists to place them both very high; for in fact Schlegel's own little person is not sufficient to comprehend and appreciate such lofty natures. If it had been, he would have been just to Euripides too, and would have gone to work with him differently. But he knows that philologists do not estimate him very highly; he therefore feels no little delight that he is permitted upon such high authority to fall foul of this mighty ancient and to schoolmaster him as much as he can. I do not deny that Euripides has faults; but he was always a very respectable competitor with Sophocles and Æschylus. If he did not possess the great earnestness and the severe artistic completeness of his two predecessors, and as a dramatic poet treated things a little more leniently and humanely, he probably knew his Athenians well enough to be aware that the chord he struck was the right one for his contemporaries. A poet whom Socrates called his friend, whom Aristotle lauded, whom Menander admired, and for whom Sophocles and the city of Athens put on mourning at his death, must certainly have been something. If a modern man like Schlegel must pick out faults in so great an ancient, he ought only to do it upon his knees."

(Sup.) Sunday, April 1, 1827.

In the evening with Goethe. I conversed with him upon the yesterday's performance of his *Iphigenia*; in which Herr Krüger, from the Theatre Royal at Berlin, played Orestes with great applause.

"The piece," said Goethe, "has its difficulties. It is rich in internal but poor in external life: the point is to make the internal life come out. It is full of the most effective means, arising from the various horrors that form the foundation of the piece. The printed words are indeed only a faint reflex of the life that stirred within me during the invention; but the actor must bring us back to this first fire which animated the poet with respect to his subject. We wish to see the vigorous Greeks and heroes, with the fresh sea-breezes blowing upon them; who, oppressed and tormented by various ills and dangers, speak out strongly as their hearts prompt them. But we want none of those feeble, sentimental actors who have only just learned their parts by rote; and still less do we want those who are not even perfect in their parts.

"I must confess that I have never succeeded in witnessing a perfect representation of my *Iphigenia*. That was the reason why I did not go yesterday; for I suffer dreadfully when I have to do with these spectres who do not manifest themselves as they ought."

"You would probably have been satisfied with Orestes as Herr Krüger represented him," said I. "There was such perspicuity in his acting, that nothing could be more comprehensible or tangible than his part: it seemed to comprise everything; and I shall never forget his words and gestures. All that belongs to the higher intuition—to the vision in this part, was so brought forward by his bodily movements, and the varying tones of his voice, that you could fancy you saw it with your own eyes. At the sight of this Orestes, Schiller would certainly not have missed the furies—they were behind him, they were around him.

"The important place where Orestes, awakening from his swoon, believes himself transported to the lower regions, succeeded to astonishment. We saw the rows of ancestors engaged in conversation: we saw Orestes join them, question them, and become one of their number. We felt ourselves transported into the midst of those blessed persons: so pure and deep was the feeling of the artist, and so great was his power of bringing the impalpable before our eyes."

"You are just the people to be worked upon," said Goethe, laughing: "but go on. He appears then to have been really good, his physical capabilities great."

"His organ," said I, "was clear and melodious; besides being well practised, and therefore capable of the highest flexion and variety. He has at command physical strength and activity in the execution of every difficulty. It seemed as if during his whole life he had never neglected to cultivate and exercise his body in every way."

"An actor," said Goethe, "should properly go to school to a sculptor and a painter; for, in order to represent a Greek hero, it is necessary for him to study the antique sculptures that have come down to us, and to impress on his mind the natural grace of their sitting, standing, and going. But the merely bodily is not enough. He must also, by diligent study of the best ancient and modern authors, give great cultivation to his mind. This will not only assist him to understand his part, but will also give a higher tone to his whole being and deportment. But tell me more! What else did you see good in him?"

"It appeared to me," said I, "that he possessed great love for his subject. He had by diligent study made every detail clear to himself, so that he lived and moved in his hero with the utmost freedom; nothing remained that he had not made entirely his own. A just expression and a just accentuation for every word; such certainty, that the prompter was superfluous."

"I am pleased with this," said Goethe; "this is as it ought to be. Nothing is more dreadful than when the actors are not masters of their parts, and at every new sentence must listen to the prompter. By this their acting becomes a mere nullity, without life or power. When the actors are not perfect in their parts in a piece like my *Iphigenia*, it is better not to play it; the piece can have success only when all goes surely, rapidly, and with animation. I am glad that it went off so well with Krüger. Zelter recommended him to me, and I should have been annoyed if he had not turned out so well. I will have a little joke with him, and will present him with a prettily bound copy of my *Iphigenia*, with some verses inscribed in reference to his acting."

The conversation then turned upon the *Antigone* of Sophocles, and the high moral tone prevailing in it; and, lastly, upon the question—how the moral element came into the world?

"Through God himself," returned Goethe, "like everything else. It is no product of human reflection, but a beautiful nature inherent and inborn. It is, more or less, inherent in mankind generally, but to a high degree in a few eminently gifted minds. These have, by great deeds or doctrines, manifested their divine nature; which then, by the beauty of its appearance, won the love of men, and powerfully attracted them to reverence and emulation.

"A consciousness of the worth of the morally beautiful and good could be attained by experience and wisdom; since the bad showed itself a destroyer of happiness both in individuals and in the whole body, while the noble and right seemed to produce and secure the happiness of one and all. Thus the morally beautiful could become a doctrine, and diffuse itself over whole nations as something plainly expressed."

"I have lately read somewhere," answered I, "the opinion that Greek tragedy had made moral beauty a special object."

"Not so much morality," returned Goethe, "as pure humanity in its whole extent; especially in positions where, by falling into contact with rude power, it could assume a tragic character. In this region, indeed, even the moral stood as a principal part of human nature.

"The morality of Antigone, besides, was not invented by Sophocles, but was contained in the subject, which Sophocles chose the more readily as it united much dramatic effect with moral beauty."

Goethe then spoke about the characters of Creon and Ismene, and the need for these two persons for the development of the beautiful soul of the heroine.

"All that is noble," said he, "is in itself of a quiet nature, and appears to sleep until summoned forth by contrast. Such a contrast is Creon; who is brought in partly on account of Antigone, that her noble nature and the right which is on her side may be brought out by him—partly on his own account, that his unhappy error may appear odious to us.

"But, as Sophocles meant to display the elevated soul of his heroine even before the deed, another contrast by which her character might be developed was requisite; and this is her sister Ismene. In this character, the poet has given us a beautiful standard of the commonplace; so that the greatness of Antigone, far above such a standard, is the more strikingly visible."

The conversation then turned upon dramatic authors in general, and upon the important influence they exerted, and could exert, upon the people.

"A great dramatic poet," said Goethe, "if he is at the same time productive, and is actuated by a strong noble purpose in all his works, may make the soul of his pieces become the soul of the people. I should think this was something well worth the trouble. From Corneille proceeded an influence capable of forming heroes. This was something for Napoleon, who had need of an heroic people; on which account he said of Corneille, that if he were still living he would make a prince of him. A dramatic poet who knows his vocation should therefore work incessantly at its higher development, so that his influence on the people may be noble and beneficial.

"Not contemporaries and competitors ought to be the objects of study; but the great men of antiquity, whose works have for centuries received equal homage and consideration. Indeed, a man of really superior endowments will feel the necessity of this; need for an intercourse with great predecessors is the sure sign of a higher talent. Study Molière, study Shakespeare; but, above all things, the old Greeks, and always the Greeks."

"For highly-endowed natures," remarked I, "the study of the authors of antiquity may be invaluable; but in general it appears to have little influence upon personal character. If this were the case,[1] all philologists and theologians would be the most excellent of men. But this is by no means so; such connoisseurs of the ancient Greek and Latin authors are able people or pitiful creatures, according to the good or bad qualities given them by God or inherited from their parents."

"There is nothing to be said against that," returned Goethe; "but it must not therefore be said that the study of the authors of antiquity is entirely without effect upon character. A worthless man will always remain worthless; and a little mind will not, by daily intercourse with the great minds of antiquity, become one inch greater. But a noble man, in whose soul God has placed the capability for future greatness of character and elevation of mind, will, through knowledge of and familiar intercourse with the elevated natures of ancient Greeks and Romans, develop to the utmost, and every day make a visible approach to similar greatness."

Wednesday, April 11, 1827.

I went to-day about one o'clock to Goethe, who had invited me to a drive with him before dinner. We took the road to Erfurt. The weather was very fine; the cornfields on both sides of the way refreshed the eye with the liveliest green. Goethe seemed as to his feelings gay and young as the early spring, but as to his words old in wisdom.

"I ever repeat it," he began, "the world could not exist, if it were not so simple. This wretched soil has been tilled a thousand years, yet its powers are always the same; a little rain, a little sun, and each spring it grows green—and so it goes on."

He allowed his eyes to wander over the verdant fields, and then, turning to me, continued thus on other subjects:

"I have been lately reading something odd—the letters of Jacobi and his friends. This is a remarkable book, and you must read it; not to learn anything from it, but to take a glance into the state of education and literature at a time of which people now have no idea. We see men of a certain importance, but with no trace of a similar tendency and a common interest; each one as an isolated being goes his own way, without sympathizing in the exertions of others. They seem to me like billiard balls; which run blindly by one another on the green cover without mutual knowledge, and which, if they come in contact, only recede so much the farther from one another."

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[1] "Wenn das wäre." But he obviously means "Otherwise."

I smiled at this simile. I asked about the corresponding persons; and Goethe named them to me, with some special remark about each.

"Jacobi was really a born diplomatist, a handsome man of slender figure, elegant and noble mien—who, as an ambassador, would have been quite in his place. As a poet, a philosopher, he had deficiencies.

"His relation to me was peculiar. He loved me personally, without taking interest in my endeavours or even approving of them: friendship was necessary to bind us together. But my connection with Schiller was very peculiar; because we found the strongest bond of union in our common efforts, and had no need of what is commonly called friendship."

I asked whether Lessing appeared in this correspondence.

"No," said he, "but Herder and Wieland do. Herder, however, did not enjoy such connections; he stood so high that this hollowness could not fail to weary him in the long run. Hamann, too, treated these people in a markedly superior way.

"Wieland, as usual, appears in these letters quite cheerful and at home. Caring for no opinion in particular, he was adroit enough to enter into all. He was like a reed, moved hither and thither by the wind of opinion, yet always adhering firmly to its root. My personal relation to Wieland was always very pleasant, especially in those earlier days when he belonged to me alone. His little tales were written at my suggestion; but, when Herder came to Weimar, Wieland was false to me. Herder took him away from me, for this man's power of personal attraction was very great."

The carriage now began to return. We saw towards the east many rain-clouds driving one into another.

"These clouds," said I, "threaten to descend in rain every moment. Do you think they could possibly dissipate, if the barometer rose?"

"Yes," said he, "they would be dispersed from the top downwards, and be spun off like a distaff at once. So strong is my faith in the barometer. I always say that if, in the night of the great inundation of Petersburg, the barometer had risen, the waves would not have overflowed.

"My son believes that the moon influences the weather, and you perhaps think the same, and I do not blame you; the moon is so important an orb that we must ascribe to it a decided influence on our earth. But the change of the weather, the rise and fall of the barometer, are not affected by the changes of the moon; they are purely telluric.

"I compare the earth and her atmosphere to a great living being perpetually inhaling and exhaling. If she inhale, she draws the atmosphere to her, so that, coming near her surface, it is condensed to clouds and rain. This state I call water-affirmative (*Wasser-bejahung*). Should it continue extraordinarily, the earth would be drowned. This the earth does not allow, but exhales again, and sends the watery vapours upwards; whereupon they are dissipated through the whole space of the higher atmosphere, and become so rarefied that not only does the sun penetrate them with his brilliancy but also the eternal darkness of infinite space is seen through as a fresh blue. This state of the atmosphere I call the water-negative (*Wasser-verneinung*). For as, under the contrary influence, not only water comes profusely from above, but also the moisture of the earth cannot be dried and dissipated —so, in this state, not only no moisture comes from above, but the damp of the earth itself flies upwards. If this should continue extraordinarily, the earth, even if the sun did not shine, would be in danger of drying up."

Thus spoke Goethe on this important subject, and I listened to him with great attention.

"The thing is very simple, and I abide by what is simple and comprehensive, without being disturbed by occasional deviations. High barometer, dry weather, east wind; low barometer, wet weather, and west wind: this is the general rule by which I abide. Should wet clouds blow hither now and then, when the barometer is high and the wind east, or, if we have a blue sky with a west wind—this does not disturb me or make me lose my faith in the general rule. I merely observe that many collateral influences exist, the nature of which we do not yet understand.

"I will tell you something, by which you may abide during your future life. There is in nature an accessible and inaccessible. Be careful to discriminate between the two; be circumspect, and proceed with reverence.

"We have already done something, if we only know this in a general way, though it is always difficult to see where one begins and the other leaves off. He who does not know it torments himself, perhaps his life long, about the inaccessible, without ever coming near the truth. But he who knows it and is wise, will confine himself to the accessible; and, while he traverses this region in every direction, and confirms himself therein, will be able to win somewhat even from the inaccessible, though he must at last confess that many things can be approached only to a certain degree, and that nature has ever in reserve something problematical which man's faculties are insufficient to fathom."

During this discourse we had returned into the town. Conversation turned upon unimportant subjects, so that those high views could still dwell for a while within me.

We had returned too early for dinner; and Goethe had time to show me a landscape by Rubens, representing a summer's evening. On the left of the foreground, you saw field-labourers going homewards; in the midst of the picture, a flock of sheep followed their shepherd to the hamlet; a little farther back, on the right, stood a hay-cart, which people were busy loading—while the horses, not yet put in, were grazing near; afar off, in the meadow and thickets, mares were grazing with their foals, and appearances indicated that they would remain there all night. Several villages and a town bordered the bright horizon of the picture, in which the ideas of activity and repose were expressed in the most graceful manner.

The whole seemed to me put together with such truth, and the details painted with such fidelity, that I said Rubens must have copied the picture from Nature.

"By no means," said Goethe. "So perfect a picture has never been seen in Nature; but we are indebted for its composition to the poetic mind of the painter. Still, the great Rubens had such an extraordinary memory that he carried all Nature in his head; she was always at his command, in the minutest particulars. Thence comes this truth in the whole and the details, so that we think it is a mere copy from Nature. No such landscapes are painted nowadays. That way of feeling and seeing Nature no longer exists. Our painters are wanting in poetry.

"Then our young talents are left to themselves; they are without living masters to initiate them into the mysteries of art. Something, indeed, may be learned from the dead; but this is rather a catching of details than a penetration into the deep thoughts and method of a master."

Frau and Herr von Goethe came in, and we sat down to dinner. The lively topics of the day, such as the theatre, balls, and the court, were discussed; but soon we found ourselves deeply engaged in conversation on the religious doctrines of England.

"You ought, like me," said Goethe, "to have studied church history for fifty years, to understand how all this hangs together. On the other hand, it is highly remarkable to see with what doctrines the Mohammedans begin the work of education. As a religious foundation, they confirm their youth in the conviction that nothing can happen to man except what was long since decreed by an all-ruling divinity. With this they are prepared and satisfied for a whole life, they scarce need anything further.

"I will not inquire what is true or false, useful or pernicious, in this doctrine; but really something of this faith is held in us all, even without being taught. 'The ball on which my name is not written, cannot hit me,' says the soldier in the battle-field; and, without such a belief, how could he maintain such courage and cheerfulness in the most imminent perils? The Christian doctrine, 'No sparrow falls to the ground without the consent of our Father,' comes from the same source, intimating that there is a Providence that keeps in its eye the smallest things, without whose will and permission nothing can happen.

"Then the Mohammedans begin their instruction in philosophy with the doctrine that there exists nothing of which the contrary may not be affirmed. Thus they practise the minds of youth, by giving them the task of detecting and expressing the opposite of every proposition; from which great adroitness in thinking and speaking is sure to arise. Certainly, after the contrary of any proposition has been maintained, doubt arises as to which is really true. But there is no permanence in doubt; it incites the mind to closer inquiry and experiment—from which, if rightly managed, certainty proceeds; and in this alone can man find thorough satisfaction.

"You see that nothing is wanting in this doctrine: that with all our systems, we have got no further; and that, generally speaking, further progress is impossible."

"You remind me of the Greeks," said I, "who made use of a similar mode of philosophical instruction: as is obvious from their tragedy; which, in its course of action, rests wholly upon contradiction—not one of the speakers ever maintaining any opinion of which the other cannot with equal dexterity maintain the contrary."

"You are perfectly right," said Goethe; "so comes the inevitable doubt which is awakened in the spectator or reader

Thus, at the end, we are brought to certainty by fate, which attaches itself to the moral, and espouses its cause."

We rose from table, and Goethe took me down with him into the garden.

"It is remarkable in Lessing," said I, "that in his theoretical writings—for instance, in the *Laocoon*—he never leads us directly to results, but always takes us by the philosophical way of opinion, counter-opinion, and doubt, before he lets us arrive at any sort of certainty. We rather see the operation of thinking and seeking, than obtain great views and great truths that can excite our own powers of thought, and make ourselves productive."

"You are right," said Goethe; "Lessing himself is reported to have said, that if God would give him truth, he would decline the gift, and prefer the labour of seeking it for himself.

"That philosophic system of the Mohammedans is a good standard, which we can apply to ourselves and others, to ascertain the degree of mental progress we have attained.

"Lessing, from his polemical nature, loved best the region of doubt and contradiction. Analysis is his province, and there his fine understanding aided him most nobly. You will find me wholly the reverse. I have always avoided contradictions, have striven to dispel the doubts within me, and have uttered only the results I have discovered."

I asked Goethe which of the new philosophers he thought the highest.

"Kant," said he, "beyond a doubt. He is the one whose doctrines still continue to work, and have penetrated most deeply into our German civilization. He has influenced even you, although you have never read him; now you need him no longer, for what he could give you you possess already. If you wish, by and by, to read something of his, I recommend to you his *Critique on the Power of Judgment*, in which he has written admirably upon rhetoric, tolerably upon poetry, but unsatisfactorily on plastic art."

"Has your excellency ever had any personal connection with Kant?"

"No," he replied; "Kant never took any notice of me, though from my own nature I went a way like his own. I wrote my *Metamorphosis of Plants* before I knew anything about Kant; and yet it is wholly in the spirit of his doctrine. The separation of subject from object, and further, the opinion that each creature exists for its own sake, and that cork-trees do not grow merely that we may stop our bottles—this Kant shared with me, and I rejoiced to meet him on such ground. Afterwards I wrote my *Doctrine of Experiment*,[1] which is to be regarded as criticism upon subject and object, and a mediation of both.

"Schiller was always wont to advise me against the study of Kant's philosophy. He usually said Kant could give me nothing; but he himself studied Kant with great zeal; and I have studied him too, and not without profit."

While talking thus, we walked up and down the garden: the clouds had been gathering; and it began to rain, so that we were obliged to return to the house.

(Sup.) Wednesday, April 18, 1827.

Before dinner, I took a ride with Goethe some distance along the road to Erfurt.

We were met by all sorts of vehicles laden with wares for the fair at Leipzig; also a string of horses, amongst which were some very fine animals.

"I cannot help laughing at the æsthetical folks," said Goethe, "who torment themselves in endeavouring by some abstract words to reduce to a conception that inexpressible thing to which we give the name of beauty. Beauty is a primeval phenomenon; which itself never makes its appearance, but the reflection of which is visible in a thousand different utterances of the creative mind and is as various as Nature herself."

"I have often heard it said that Nature is always beautiful," said I; "that she causes artists to despair, because they are seldom capable of reaching her completely."

"I know well," returned Goethe, "that Nature often reveals an unattainable charm; but I am by no means of opinion that she is beautiful in all her aspects. Her intentions are, indeed, always good; but not so the conditions required to make her manifest herself completely.

"Thus, the oak may be very beautiful; but how many favourable circumstances must concur before Nature can succeed in producing one truly beautiful! If an oak grow in the midst of a forest, encompassed by large neighbouring trunks, its tendency will always be upwards, towards free air and light; only small weak branches will grow on its sides, and these will in the course of a century decay and fall off. But if it has at last succeeded in reaching the free air with its summit, it will then rest in its upward tendency, and begin to spread itself from its sides, and form a crown. But it is by this time already past its middle age: its many years of upward striving have consumed its freshest powers, and its present endeavour to put forth its strength by increasing in breadth will not now have its proper results. When full grown, it will be high, strong, and slender-stemmed, but still without such a proportion between its crown and its stem as would render it beautiful.

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[1] The title of this paper, which appeared in 1793, and is contained in Goethe's works, is *Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt*.—J. O.

"Again; if the oak grow in a moist marshy place, and the earth is too nourishing, it will, with proper space, prematurely shoot forth many branches and twigs on all sides: but it will still want the opposing, retarding influences: it will not show itself gnarled, stubborn, and indented; and, seen from a distance, it will appear a weak tree of the lime species; it will not be beautiful—at least, not as an oak.

"If, lastly, it grow upon a mountainous slope, upon poor stony soil, it will become excessively gnarled and knotty; but it will lack free development: it will become prematurely stunted, and will never attain such perfection that one can say of it, 'There is in that oak something that creates astonishment.'"

"I saw very beautiful oaks," said I, "when, some years ago, I made short tours from Göttingen into the valley of the Weser. I found them particularly magnificent in the neighbourhood of Höxter."

"A sandy soil, or one mixed with sand," continued Goethe, "where the oak is able to spread its strong roots in every direction, appears to be most favourable; and then it needs a situation with the necessary space to feel the effects on all sides of light, sun, rain, and wind. If it grows up snugly sheltered from wind and weather, it becomes nothing; but a century's struggle with the elements makes it strong and powerful, so that, at its full growth, its presence inspires us with astonishment and admiration."

"From these remarks of yours," returned I, "cannot this conclusion be drawn: 'A creature is beautiful when it has attained the summit of its natural development'?"

"Certainly," returned Goethe; "but still what is meant by the summit of its natural development has to be explained."

"I would by that," returned I, "signify the period of growth in which the character peculiar to any creature appears perfectly impressed on it."

"In that sense," said Goethe, "there would be nothing to object—especially if we add that, for such a perfect development of character, it is likewise requisite that the build of the different members of a creature should be conformable to its natural destination.

"In that case, a marriageable girl, whose natural destiny is to bear and suckle children, will not be beautiful without the proper breadth of the pelvis and the necessary fulness of the breasts. Still, an excess in these respects would not be beautiful, for that would go beyond conformity to an end. On this account, we might call some of the saddle-horses we met a little time ago beautiful, even according to the fitness of their build. It is not merely the elegance, lightness, and grace of their movements; but something more, of which a good horseman and judge of horses alone can speak, and of which we others merely receive the general impression."

"Might we not, on the other hand," said I, "call a cart-horse beautiful, like those strong specimens we met a little time ago drawing the wagons of the Brabant carriers?"

"Certainly," said Goethe; "and why not? A painter would probably find a far more varied display of beauties in the strongly-marked character and powerful development of bone, sinew, and muscle, in such an animal, than in the softer and more equal character of an elegant saddle-horse.

"The main point is," continued Goethe, "that the race is pure, and that man has not applied his mutilating hand. A horse with his mane and tail cut, a hound with cropped ears, a tree from which the strongest branches have been lopped and the rest cut into a spherical form, and, above all, a young girl whose youthful form has been spoiled and deformed by stays, are things from which good taste revolts, and which occupy a place in the beauty-catechism of the Philistine only."

With this and similar conversations, we had returned. We walked about a little in the garden of the house before dinner. The weather was very beautiful; the spring sun grew powerful, bringing out all sorts of leaves and blossoms on bushes and hedges. Goethe was full of thought and hopes of a delightful summer.

At dinner we were very cheerful. Young Goethe had read his father's *Helena*, and spoke upon it with much judgment and natural intelligence. He showed decided delight at the part conceived in the antique spirit; while we could see that he had not fully entered into the operatic, romantic half.

"You are right," said Goethe; "it is something peculiar. The rational cannot be said to be always beautiful; but the beautiful is always rational—at least it ought to be. The antique part pleases you because it is comprehensible; because you can take a survey of the details, and approach my reason with your own. In the second half too, all sorts of understanding and reason are employed; but it requires some study, before the reader can discover the author's reason."

Goethe then praised the poems of Madame Tastu, with which he had been lately occupied.

When the rest had departed, and I also prepared to go, he begged of me to remain a little longer. He ordered a portfolio, with engravings and etchings by Dutch masters, to be brought in.

"I will treat you with something good, by way of dessert," said he. With these words, he placed before me a landscape by Rubens.

"You have already seen this picture," said he; "but nobody can look often enough at anything really excellent—besides, there is something very particular in this. Will you tell me what you see?"

"I begin from the distance," said I. "I see in the farthest background a very clear sky, as if after sunset. Then, still in the far distance, a village and a town, in the light of evening. In the middle of the picture there is a road, along which a flock of sheep is hastening to the village. At the right hand of the picture are several haystacks, and a wagon which appears well laden. Unharnessed[1] horses are grazing near. On one side, among the bushes, are several mares with their foals, which appear as if they were going to remain out of doors all night. Then, nearer to the foreground, there is a group of large trees; and lastly, quite in the foreground to the left, there are various labourers returning homewards."

"Good," said Goethe, "that is apparently all. But the principal point is still wanting. All these things, which we see represented, the flock of sheep, the wagon with hay, the horses, the returning labourers—on which side are they lighted?"

"They receive light," said I, "from the side turned to us, and the shadow is thrown into the picture. The returning labourers in the foreground are especially in the light, which produces an excellent effect."

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[1] The original says "harnessed" (*angeschirrt*), but as this is evidently the same engraving as the one mentioned at p. 189, where the horses are described as "unharnessed" (*abgespannt*), I assume that *angeschirrt* is a misprint for *abgeschirrt*.—J. O.

"But how has Rubens produced this beautiful effect?"

"By making these light figures appear on a dark ground," said I.

"But this dark ground," said Goethe, "whence does it arise!"

"It is the powerful shadow thrown by the group of trees towards the figures," said I. "But how?" continued I, with surprise; "the figures cast their shadows into the picture; the group of trees, on the contrary, cast theirs towards the spectator. We have, thus, light from two different sides, which is quite contrary to Nature."

"That is the point," returned Goethe, with a smile. "It is by this that Rubens proves himself great, and shows to the world that he, with a free spirit, stands *above* Nature, and treats her conformably to his high purposes. The double light is certainly a violent expedient, and you certainly say that it is contrary to Nature. But if it is contrary to Nature, I still say it is higher than Nature; I say it is the bold stroke of the master, by which he, in a genial manner, proclaims to the world, that art is not entirely subject to natural necessities, but has laws of its own.

"The artist," continued Goethe, "must, indeed, in his details faithfully and reverently copy Nature; he must not arbitrarily change the structure of the bones, or the position of the muscles and sinews of an animal, so that the peculiar character is destroyed. This would be annihilating Nature. But in the higher regions of artistical production, by which a picture really becomes a picture, he has freer play; and here he may have recourse to *fictions*, as Rubens has done with the double light in this landscape.

"The artist has a twofold relation to Nature; he is at once her master and her slave. He is her slave, inasmuch as he must work with earthly things, in order to be understood; but he is her master, inasmuch as he subjects these earthly means to his higher intentions, and renders them subservient.

"The artist would speak to the world through an entirety; he does not find this entirety in Nature—it is the fruit of his own mind; or, if you like it, of the aspiration of a fructifying divine breath.

"If we observe this landscape by Rubens cursorily, everything appears as natural to us as if it had been copied exactly from Nature. But this is not so. So beautiful a picture has never been seen in Nature—any more than a landscape by Poussin or Claude Lorraine, which appears very natural to us, but which we vainly seek in the actual world."

"Are there not," said I, "bold strokes of artistic fiction, similar to this double light of Rubens, to be found in literature?"

"We need not go far," said Goethe, after some reflection; "I could show you a dozen of them in Shakespeare. Only take *Macbeth*. When the lady would animate her husband to the deed, she says:

> I have given suck, etc.

Whether this be true or not does not appear; but the lady says it, and she must say it, in order to give emphasis to her speech. But in the course of the piece, when Macduff hears of the account of the destruction of his family, he exclaims in wild rage:

> He has no children!

These words of Macduff contradict those of Lady Macbeth; but this does not trouble Shakespeare. The grand point with him is the force of each speech; and as the lady, in order to give the highest emphasis to her words, must say 'I have given suck,' so, for the same purpose, Macduff must say 'He has no children.'

"Generally," continued Goethe, "we must not judge too exactly and narrowly of the pencil touches of a painter, or the words of a poet; we should rather contemplate and enjoy a work of art that has been produced in a bold and free spirit, and if possible with the same spirit.

"Thus it would be foolish, if, from the words of Macbeth:

> Bring forth men children only! etc.

it were concluded that the lady was a young creature who had not yet borne any children. It would be equally foolish if we were to go still further, and say that the lady must be represented on the stage as a very youthful person.

"Shakespeare does not make Macbeth say these words to show the youth of the lady. Like those of Lady Macbeth and Macduff, which I quoted just now, they are introduced merely for rhetorical purposes, and prove nothing more than that the poet always makes his character say whatever is proper, effective, and good in each *particular place*, without troubling himself to calculate whether these words may perhaps fall into apparent contradiction with some other passage.

"Shakespeare, in writing his pieces, could hardly have thought that they would appear in print, so as to be told over, and compared one with another; he had rather the stage in view when he wrote [1]; he regarded his plays as a lively and moving scene, that would pass rapidly before the eyes and ears upon the stage, not as one that was to be held firmly, and carped at in detail. Hence, his only point was to be effective and significant for the moment."

(Sup.) Tuesday, April 24, 1827.

August Wilhelm von Schlegel is here. Goethe took a drive with him round the Webicht before dinner, and this evening gave a great tea-party in his honour, at which Schlegel's fellow-traveller Dr. Lassen was present. All in Weimar, of any rank and name, were invited, so that the press in Goethe's room was very great. Herr von Schlegel was surrounded by ladies, to whom he showed thin rolled-up strips with images of Indian gods, as well as the whole text of two great Indian poems of which nobody but himself and Dr. Lassen probably understood anything. Schlegel was dressed with extreme neatness, and had an extremely youthful and blooming appearance, so that some of the assembled guests were pleased to maintain that he appeared not unskilled in the use of cosmetic means.

Goethe drew me to the window. "Now, how does he please you?" "Not better than I expected," returned I. "He is, in many respects, no true man," continued Goethe; "still, we must bear with him a little, on account of his extensive knowledge and great deserts."

(Sup.) Wednesday, April 25, 1827.

Dined with Goethe and Dr. Lassen—Schlegel had once more gone to dine at the court. Here Lassen displayed great knowledge of Indian poetry; which seemed highly acceptable to Goethe, as he could thus complete his own very deficient knowledge of these things.

In the evening I again spent a few moments with Goethe. He related that Schlegel had been with him at twilight, and they had carried on a very important conversation on historical and literary subjects, very instructive to him. "Only," said he, "one must not expect grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles; for the rest, all is very excellent."

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[1] In thus declaring the emancipation of Shakespeare from the bonds of consistency, Goethe exemplifies his own. For it will be seen, on referring back, p. 123, that on December 25, 1825, he said that Shakespeare "is not a theatrical poet; he never thought of the stage."

(Sup.) Thursday, May 3, 1827.

The highly successful translation of Goethe's dramatic works, by Stapfer, was noticed by Monsieur J. J. Ampère in the Parisian *Globe* of last year, in a manner no less excellent; and this affected Goethe so agreeably that he very often recurred to it, and expressed his great obligations.

"Ampère's point of view is a very high one," said he. "Whereas German critics on similar occasions start from philosophy, and in the consideration and discussion of a poetical production proceed so that what they intend as an elucidation is intelligible only to philosophers of their own school—while for other people it is far more obscure than the work upon which they intended to throw light—M. Ampère shows himself quite practical and popular. Like one who knows his profession thoroughly, he shows the relation between the production and the producer, and judges the different poetical productions as different fruits of different epochs of the poet's life.

"He has studied most profoundly the changing course of my earthly career, and of my state of mind, and has had the faculty of seeing what I have not expressed and what could only be read between the lines. How truly has he remarked that, during the first ten years of my official and court life at Weimar, I scarcely did anything; that despair drove me to Italy; and that I there, with new delight in producing, seized upon the history of Tasso, in order to free myself, by the treatment of this agreeable subject, from the painful and troublesome impressions and recollections of my life at Weimar! He therefore very happily calls *Tasso* an elevated *Werther*.

"Then, concerning *Faust*, his remarks are no less acute; since he notes not only the gloomy discontented striving of the principal character, but also the scorn and the bitter irony of Mephistopheles, as part of myself."

In this, and a similar spirit of acknowledgment, Goethe often spoke of M. Ampère. We took a decided interest in him: we endeavoured to picture to ourselves his personal appearance; and, if we could not succeed in this, we at least agreed that he must be a man of middle age to understand the reciprocal action of life and poetry. We were therefore extremely surprised when M. Ampère arrived in Weimar a few days ago, and proved to be a lively youth, some twenty years old; and we were no less surprised when, in the course of further intercourse, he told us that all the contributors to the *Globe,* whose wisdom, moderation, and high degree of cultivation, we had often admired, were only young people like himself.

"I can well comprehend," said I, "that a person may be young and may still produce something of importance—like Mérimée, for instance, who wrote excellent pieces in his twentieth year; but that anyone at so early an age should have at his command such a comprehensive view, and such deep insight, as to attain such mature judgment as the gentlemen of the *Globe,* is to me something entirely new."

"To you, in your Heath,"[1] returned Goethe, "it has not been so easy; and we others also, in Central Germany, have been forced to buy our little wisdom dearly enough. Then we all lead a very isolated miserable sort of life! From the people, properly so called, we derive very little culture. Our talents and men of brains are scattered over the whole of Germany. One is in Vienna, another in Berlin, another in Königsberg, another in Bonn or Düsseldorf—all about a hundred miles apart from each other, so that personal contact and personal exchange of thought may be considered rarities. I feel what this must be, when such men as Alexander von Humboldt come here, and in one single day lead me nearer to what I am seeking, and what I require to know, than I should have attained in years in my own solitary way.

"But now conceive a city like Paris, where the highest talents of a great kingdom are all assembled on one spot, and, by daily intercourse, strife, and emulation, mutually instruct and advance each other; where the best works, of both nature and art, from all the kingdoms of the earth, are open to daily inspection—conceive this metropolis of the world, I say, where every walk over a bridge or across a square recalls some mighty past, and where some historical event is connected with every corner of a street. In addition to all this, conceive not the Paris of a dull spiritless time, but the Paris of the nineteenth century, in which, during three generations, such men as Molière, Voltaire, Diderot, and the like, have kept up such a current of intellect as cannot be found twice on a single spot in the whole world; and you will comprehend that a man of talent like Ampère, who has grown up amid such abundance, can easily be something in his four-and-twentieth year."

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[1] This doubtless refers to the Heath country in which Eckermann was born.—J. O.

"You said just now," said Goethe, "that you could well understand how anyone in his twentieth year could write pieces as good as those of Mérimée. I have nothing to oppose to this; and I am, on the whole, of your opinion that good productiveness is easier than good judgment in a young man. But in Germany, it is better not, when so young as Mérimée, to attempt anything so mature as his pieces of *Clara Gazul.* It is true, Schiller was very young when he wrote his *Robbers*, his *Love and Intrigue*, his *Fiesco*; but, to speak the truth, all three pieces are rather the utterances of an extraordinary talent than signs of mature cultivation in the author. This, however, is not Schiller's fault, but rather the result of the state of culture of his nation and the great difficulty we all experience in assisting ourselves on our solitary way.

"On the other hand, take up Béranger. He is the son of poor parents, the descendant of a poor tailor; at one time a poor printer's apprentice, then placed in some office with a small salary: he has never been to a classical school or university; and yet his songs are so full of mature cultivation, so full of wit and the most refined irony, and there is such artistic perfection and masterly handling of the language, that he is the admiration, not only of France, but of all civilized Europe.

"But imagine this same Béranger—instead of being born in Paris and brought up in this metropolis of the world—the son of a poor tailor in Jena or Weimar; let him commence his career, in an equally miserable manner, in such small places; and ask yourself what fruit would have been produced by this same tree grown in such a soil and in such an atmosphere.

"So I repeat: if a talent is to be speedily and happily developed, the great point is that a great deal of intellect and sound culture should be current in a nation.

"We admire the tragedies of the ancient Greeks. But, to take a correct view of the case, we ought rather to admire the period and the nation in which their production was possible than the individual authors; for, though these pieces differ a little from each other, and though one of these poets appears somewhat greater and more finished than another, still, taking all together, only one decided character runs through the whole: grandeur, fitness, soundness, human perfection, elevated wisdom, sublime thought, pure strong intuition, et cetera. But when we find all these qualities, not only in the dramatic works that have come down to us, but also in lyrical and epic works—in the philosophers, the orators, and the historians, and in an equally high degree in the works of plastic art that have come down to us—we must feel convinced that such qualities did not merely belong to individuals, but were the current property of the nation and the whole period.

"Now, take up Burns. How is he great, except through the circumstance that all the songs of his predecessors lived in the mouth of the people—that they were, so to speak, sung at his cradle; that, as a boy, he grew up amongst them, and the high excellence of these models so pervaded him that he had therein a living basis on which he could proceed further? Again, why is he great, but from this: his own songs at once found susceptible ears amongst his compatriots; sung by reapers and sheaf-binders, they at once greeted him in the field; and his boon-companions sang them to welcome him at the ale-house? *That* surely was the way something could be done!

"On the other hand, what a pitiful figure is made by us Germans! Of our old songs—no less important than those of Scotland—how many lived among the people in the days of my youth? Herder and his successors first began to collect them and to rescue them from oblivion; then they were at least in print in the libraries. Then, later, what songs have not Bürger and Voss composed! Who can say they are more insignificant or less popular than those of the excellent Burns? but which of them so lives among us that it greets us from the mouth of the people?—they are written and printed, and they remain in the libraries, quite in accordance with the general fate of German poets. Of my own songs, how many live? Perhaps one or another of them may be sung by a pretty girl to the piano; but among the *people* they have no sound. With what sensations I remember when passages from Tasso were sung to me by Italian fishermen!

"We Germans are of yesterday. We have indeed been properly cultivated for a century; but a few centuries more must elapse before so much mind and elevated culture will become universal amongst our people that they will appreciate beauty like the Greeks, will be inspired by a beautiful song; before it will be said of them, 'it is long since they were barbarians.'"

(Sup.) Friday, May 4, 1827.

A grand dinner at Goethe's, in honour of Ampère and his friend Stapfer. The conversation was loud, cheerful, and varied. Ampère told Goethe a great deal about Mérimée, Alfred de Vigny, and other talents of importance. A great deal also was said about Béranger, whose inimitable songs are daily in Goethe's thoughts. There was a discussion whether Béranger's cheerful amatory songs or his political ones merited preference; whereupon Goethe expressed his opinion that in general a purely poetical subject is as superior to a political one as the pure everlasting truth of nature is to party spirit.

"However," continued he, "Béranger has, in his political poems, shown himself the benefactor of his nation. After the invasion of the allies, the French found in him the best organ for their suppressed feelings. He directed their attention by various recollections to the glory of their arms under the Emperor; whose memory still lives in every cottage, and whose great qualities the poet loved without desiring a continuance of his despotic sway. Now, under the Bourbons, he does not seem too comfortable. They are, indeed, a degenerate race; and the Frenchman of the present day desires great qualities upon the throne, although he likes to take part in the government and put in his own word."

After dinner the company dispersed in the garden; and Goethe beckoned me to take a drive round the wood, on the road to Tiefurt.

While in the carriage he was very pleasant and affable. He was glad he had formed so pleasant an intimacy with Ampère; promising himself, as a result, the fairest consequences with respect to the acknowledgment and diffusion of German literature in France.

"Ampère," continued he, "stands so high in culture that the national prejudices, apprehensions, and narrow-mindedness of many of his countrymen lie far behind him; and in mind he is far more a citizen of the world than of Paris. But I see a time coming when there will be thousands in France who think like him."

(Sup.) Sunday, May 6, 1827.

A second dinner-party at Goethe's, to which the same people came as the day before yesterday. Much was said about *Helena* and *Tasso*. Goethe related to us that in the year 1797 he had formed the plan of treating the tradition concerning Tell as an epic poem in hexameters.

"In the same year," said he, "I visited the small cantons, and the lake of the four cantons; and this charming, magnificent, grand scenery made once more such an impression upon me, that it induced me to represent in a poem the variety and richness of so incomparable a landscape. But, in order to throw more charm, interest, and life into my representation, I considered it good to people this highly-striking spot with equally striking human figures; for which purpose the tradition concerning Tell appeared to me admirably fitted.

"I saw Tell as a heroic man, possessed of native strength; but contented with himself, and in a state of childish unconsciousness. He traverses the canton as a carrier, and is everywhere known and beloved, everywhere ready with his assistance. He peacefully follows his calling, providing for his wife and child, and not troubling himself who is lord or who is serf.

"Gessler, on the contrary, I saw as a tyrant; but as one of the comfortable sort who occasionally do good when it suits them and occasionally harm when it suits them, and to whom the people with its weal and woe is as totally indifferent as if it did not exist.

"The higher and better qualities of human nature, on the contrary—the love of native soil; the feeling of freedom and security under the protection of the laws of the country; the feeling, moreover, of the disgrace of being subjugated, and occasionally ill-treated, by a foreign debauchee; and lastly, strength of mind matured to a determination to throw off so obnoxious a yoke—all these great and good qualities I had shared among the well-known noble-minded men: Walter Fürst, Stauffacher, Winkelried, and others; and these were my proper heroes, my higher powers, acting with consciousness—while Tell and Gessler, though occasionally brought into action, were, upon the whole, rather passive figures.

"I was quite full of this beautiful subject, and was already humming my hexameters. I saw the lake in the quiet moonlight, illuminated mists in the depth of the mountains. I then saw it in the light of the loveliest morning sun—a rejoicing and a life in wood and meadow. Then I described a storm—a thunderstorm, which swept from the hollows over the lake. Neither was there any lack of the stillness of night, nor of secret meetings approached by bridges.

"I related all this to Schiller, in whose soul my landscapes and my acting figures formed themselves into a drama. And as I had other things to do, and the execution of my design was deferred more and more, I gave up my subject entirely to Schiller, who thereupon wrote his admirable play."

We were pleased with this communication, which was interesting to us all. I remarked that it appeared to me as if the splendid description of sunrise in the first scene of the second act of *Faust* written in Terza Rima, were founded upon the recalled impressions of the lake of the four cantons.

"I will not deny," said Goethe, "that these contemplations proceed from that source; nay, without the fresh impressions of those wonderful scenes, I could never have conceived the subject of that Terza Rima. But that is all I have coined from the gold of my Tell-localities. The rest I left to Schiller; who, as we know, made the most beautiful use of it."

The conversation now turned upon *Tasso,* and the idea Goethe had endeavoured to represent by it.

"Idea!" said Goethe, "as if I knew anything about it. I had the life of Tasso, I had my own life; and whilst I brought together two odd figures with their peculiarities, there arose in my mind the image of Tasso; to which I opposed, as a prosaic contrast, that of Antonio, for whom also I did not lack models. The further particulars of court life and love affairs were at Weimar as they were in Ferrara; and I can truly say of my production, *it is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.*

"The Germans are, certainly, strange people. By their deep thoughts and ideas, which they seek in everything and fix upon everything, they make life much more burdensome than is necessary. Only have the courage to give yourself up to your impressions: allow yourself to be delighted, moved, elevated; nay, instructed and inspired for something great: but do not imagine all is vanity, if it is not abstract thought and idea.

"They come and ask what idea I meant to embody in my *Faust*; as if I knew myself, and could inform them. *From heaven, through the world, to hell,* would indeed be something; but this is no idea, only a course of action. And further: that the devil loses the wager, and that a man continually struggling from difficult errors towards something better, should be redeemed, is an effective—and, to many, a good enlightening—thought; but it is no idea at the foundation of the whole, and of every individual scene. It would have been a fine thing indeed if I had strung so rich, varied, and highly diversified a life as I have brought to view in *Faust* upon the slender string of one pervading idea.

"It was, in short," continued Goethe, "not in my line, as a poet, to strive to embody anything *abstract.* I received in my mind impressions, and those of a sensuous, animated, charming, varied, hundredfold kind—just as a lively imagination presented them; and I had, as a poet, nothing more to do than to round off and elaborate artistically such views and impressions, and by means of a lively representation so to bring them forward that others might receive the same impression in hearing or reading my representation of them.

"If I still wished, as a poet, to represent any idea, I would do it in short poems, where a decided unity could prevail, and where a complete survey would be easy; as, for instance, in the Metamorphosis of Animals, that of the plants, the poem *Bequest* (Vermächtniss), and many others. The only production of greater extent in which I am conscious of having laboured to set forth a pervading idea is probably my *Wahlverwandtschaften.* This novel has thus become comprehensible to the understanding; but I will not say that it is therefore better. I am rather of the opinion, that the more incommensurable, and the more incomprehensible to the understanding, a poetic production is, so much the better it is."

(Sup.) Tuesday, May 15, 1827.

Herr von Holtey, from Paris, has been here for some time, and has been well received everywhere, on account of his person and talent. A very friendly intimacy has also been formed between him and Goethe and his family.

Goethe has for some days been drawn into his garden, where he is very happy with quiet activity. I called upon him there to-day, with Herr von Holtey and Count Schulenburg; the former of whom took his leave, in order to go to Berlin with Ampère.

Wednesday, June 20, 1827.

The family table was covered for five; the rooms were vacant and cool; which was very pleasant, considering the great heat. I went into the spacious room next the dining-hall, where are the worked carpet and the colossal bust of Juno.

After I had walked up and down alone for a short time, Goethe came in from his work-room, and seated himself by the window. "Take a chair too," said he; "we will talk a little before the others arrive. I am glad that you have become acquainted with Count Sternberg at my house; he has departed, and I am now once more in my wonted state of activity and repose."

"The present appearance and manner of the Count," said I, "seemed to me remarkable, as well as his great attainments. Whatever the conversation turned on, he was always at home, and talked about everything with the greatest ease though with thoroughness and discretion."

"Yes," said Goethe, "he is a highly remarkable man, and his influence and connections in Germany are extensive. As a botanist, he is known throughout Europe by his *Flora Subterranea*, and he also stands high as a mineralogist. Do you know his history?"

"No," said I, "but I should like to hear something about him. I saw him as a count and a man of the world, and also a person profoundly versed in various branches of science. This is a riddle I should like to see solved."

Goethe told me the Count in his youth had been destined for the priesthood, and had commenced his studies at Rome; but afterwards, when Austria had withdrawn certain favours, he had gone to Naples. Goethe then proceeded, in the most profound and interesting manner, to set forth a remarkable life, which would have adorned the *Wanderjahre*, but which I do not feel I can repeat here. The conversation now turned upon the Bohemian schools, and their great advantages—especially for a thorough æsthetic culture.

Frau von Goethe, young Goethe, and Fräulein Ulrica, now came in; and we sat down to table. The conversation was gay and varied, the pietists of some cities in Northern Germany being a subject. It was remarked that these pietistical separations had destroyed the harmony of whole families.

I was able to give an instance of the kind, having nearly lost an excellent friend because he could not convert me to his opinions. He, as I stated, was thoroughly convinced that good works and one's own merits are of no avail, and that man can only win favour with the Deity by the grace of Christ.

"A female friend," observed Frau von Goethe, "said something of the sort to me; but even now I scarcely know what is meant by grace and what by good works."

"According to the present course of the world, in conversing on all such topics," said Goethe, "there is nothing but a medley; and perhaps none of you knows whence it comes. I will tell you. The doctrine of good works—namely, that man, by good actions, legacies, and beneficent institutions, can avoid the penalty of sin, and rise in the favour of God—is Catholic. But the reformers, out of opposition, rejected this doctrine, and declared in lieu of it that man must seek solely to recognize the merits of Christ and become a partaker of his grace; which, indeed, leads to good works. But nowadays all this is mingled together, and nobody knows whence a thing comes."

I remarked, more in thought than openly, that difference of opinion in religious matters had always sown dissension among men, and made them enemies; nay, that the first murder had been caused by a difference in the mode of worshipping God. I said that I had lately been reading Byron's *Cain*, and had been particularly struck by the third act, and the manner in which the murder is brought about.

"It is indeed admirable," said Goethe. "Its beauty is such as we shall not see a second time in the world."

"*Cain*," said I, "was at first prohibited in England; but now everybody reads it, and young English travellers usually carry a complete Byron with them."

"It was folly," said Goethe; "for in fact there is nothing in the whole of *Cain* that is not taught by the English bishops themselves."

The Chancellor was announced. He came in and sat down with us at table. Goethe's grandchildren, Walter and Wolfgang, also came in, jumping one after the other. Wolf pressed close to the Chancellor.

"Bring your album," said Goethe, "and show the Chancellor your princess, and what Count Sternberg wrote for you."

Wolf sprang up and brought the book. The Chancellor looked at the portrait of the princess, with the verses annexed by Goethe. Turning over the leaves, he came to Zelter's inscription, and read aloud, *Lerne gehorchen* ("Learn to obey").

"Those are the only rational words in the whole book," said Goethe, laughing. "Indeed, Zelter is always majestic and to the point. I am now looking over his letters with Riemer; and they contain invaluable things. Those letters he has written me on his travels are especially of worth; for he has, as a sound architect and musician, the advantage that he can never want interesting subjects for criticism. As soon as he enters a city, the buildings stand before him, and tell him their merits and their faults.

"Then the musical societies receive him at once, and show themselves to the master with their virtues and their defects. If a shorthand writer could but have recorded his conversations with his musical scholars, we should possess something unique. In such matters is Zelter great and genial, and always hits the nail on the head."

Thursday, July 5, 1827.

Towards evening, I met Goethe in the park, returning from a ride. As he passed he beckoned to me to come and see him. I went immediately to his house, where I found Coudray. Goethe alighted, and we went up the steps with him. We sat down to the round table in the so-called Juno-room, and had not talked long before the Chancellor came in and joined us. The conversation turned on political subjects—Wellington's embassy to St. Petersburg and its probable consequences, Capo d'Istria, the delayed liberation of Greece, the restriction of the Turks to Constantinople, and the like.

We talked, too, of Napoleon's times; especially about the Duke d'Enghien, whose incautious revolutionary conduct was much discussed.

We then came to more pacific topics, and Wieland's tomb at Osmannstedt was a fruitful subject. Coudray told us he was engaged on an iron enclosure for the tomb. He gave us a clear notion of his intention, drawing the form of the iron railing.

When the Chancellor and Coudray departed, Goethe asked me to stay. "For one who, like me, lives through ages," said he, "it always seems odd when I hear about statues and monuments. I can never think of a statue erected in honour of a distinguished man without already seeing it cast down and trampled upon by future warriors. Already I see Coudray's iron railing about Wieland's grave forged into horseshoes, and shining under the feet of future cavalry; and I may even say that I have witnessed such a case at Frankfort. Wieland's grave is, besides, much too near the Ilm; the stream in less than a hundred years will have so worn the shore by its sudden turn, that it will have reached the body."

We had some good-humoured jests about the terrible inconstancy of earthly things, and then, returning to Coudray's drawing, were delighted with the delicate and strong strokes of the English pencils, which are so obedient to the draughtsman that the thought is conveyed immediately to the paper without the slightest loss. This led the conversation to drawing; and Goethe showed me a fine one by an Italian master, representing the boy Jesus in the temple with the doctors. He then showed me an engraving after the finished picture on this subject; and many remarks were made, all in favour of drawings.

"I have lately been so fortunate," said he, "as to buy, at a reasonable rate, many excellent drawings by celebrated masters.

Such drawings are invaluable—not only because they give, in its purity, the mental intention of the artist; but also because they bring immediately before us the mood of his mind at the moment of creation. In every stroke of this drawing of the boy Jesus in the temple, we perceive the great clearness and quiet serene resolution in the mind of the artist; and this beneficial mood is extended to us while we contemplate the work. The arts of painting and sculpture have, moreover, the great advantage that they are purely objective, and attract us without violently exciting our feelings. Such a work either speaks to us not at all, or speaks in a very decided manner. A poem, on the other hand, makes a far more vague impression—exciting in each hearer different emotions."

"I have," said I, "been lately reading Smollett's excellent novel of *Roderick Random*. It gave me almost the same impression as a good drawing. It is a direct representation of the subject, without a trace of a leaning towards the sentimental; actual life stands before us as it is—often repulsive and detestable enough, yet as a whole giving a pleasant impression on account of the decided reality."

"I have often heard the praises of *Roderick Random*, and believe what you say of it, but have never read it. Do you know Johnson's *Rasselas*? Just read it, and tell me what you think of it."

I promised to do so.

"In Lord Byron," said I, "I frequently find passages that merely bring objects before us, without affecting our feelings otherwise than the drawing of a good painter. *Don Juan* is especially rich in such passages."

"Yes," said Goethe, "here Lord Byron was great; his pictures have an air of reality, as lightly thrown off as if they were improvised. I know but little of *Don Juan*; but I remember passages from his other poems—especially sea scenes, with a sail peeping out here and there; which are quite invaluable, for they make us feel the sea-breeze blowing."

"In his *Don Juan*," said I, "I have particularly admired the representation of London, which his careless verses bring before our very eyes. He is not very scrupulous whether an object is poetical or not; he seizes and uses all just as they come before him, down to the wigs in the haircutter's window and the men who fill the street-lamps with oil."

"Our German æsthetical people," said Goethe, "are always talking about poetical and unpoetical objects; and in one respect they are not quite wrong, yet at bottom no real object is unpoetical if the poet knows how to use it properly."

We then spoke of the *Two Foscari*, and I remarked that Byron drew excellent women.

"His women," said Goethe, "are good. Indeed, this is the only vase into which we moderns can pour our ideality; nothing can be done with the men. Homer has got all beforehand in Achilles and Ulysses, the bravest and the most prudent."

"There is something terrible in the *Foscari*," I continued, "on account of the frequent recurrence of the rack. It is hard to conceive how Lord Byron could dwell so long on this torturing subject, for the sake of the piece."

"That sort of thing," said Goethe, "was Byron's element: he was always a self-tormentor; hence such subjects were his darling theme, as you see in all his works—scarcely one has a cheerful subject. But the execution of the *Foscari* is worthy of great praise—is it not?"

"Admirable!" said I; "every word is strong, significant, and subservient to the aim; indeed, I have hitherto found no weak lines in Byron. I always fancy I see him issuing from the sea-waves, fresh, and full of creative power. The more I read him, the more I admire the greatness of his talent; and I think you were right to present him with that immortal monument of love in *Helena*."

"I could not," said Goethe, "make use of any man as the representative of the modern poetical era except him, who undoubtedly is the greatest genius of our century. Again, Byron is neither antique nor romantic, but like the present day itself. This was the sort of man I required. Then he suited me on account of his unsatisfied nature and his warlike tendency, which led to his death at Missolonghi. A treatise upon Byron would be neither convenient nor advisable; but I shall not fail to pay him honour and to allude to him at proper times."

Goethe spoke further of *Helena*, now it had again become a subject of discourse. "I at first intended a very different close," said he. "I modified it in various ways, and once very well, but I will not tell you how. Then this conclusion with Lord Byron and Missolonghi was suggested to me by the events of the day, and I gave up all the rest. You have observed the character of the chorus is quite destroyed by the mourning song: until this time it has remained thoroughly antique, or has never belied its girlish nature; but here of a sudden it becomes nobly reflecting, and says things such as it has never thought or could think."

"Certainly," said I, "I remarked it; but, since I have seen Rubens's landscape with the double shadow, and have got an insight into the idea of fiction, such things do not disturb me. These little inconsistencies are of no consequence, if by their means a higher degree of beauty is obtained.[1] The song had to be sung somehow or other; and, as there was no other chorus present, the girls were forced to sing it."

"I wonder," said Goethe, laughing, "what the German critics will say? Will they have freedom and boldness enough to get over this? Understanding will be in the way of the French; they will not consider that the imagination has its own laws, to which the understanding cannot and should not penetrate.

"If imagination did not originate things that must ever be problems to the understanding, there would be but little for the imagination to do. It is this which separates poetry from prose—in which understanding always is, and always should be, at home."

I now took leave, for it was ten o'clock. We had been sitting without candles; the clear summer evening shining from the north over the Ettersberg.

Monday evening, July 9, 1827.

I found Goethe alone, examining the plaster-casts from the Stosch cabinet. "My Berlin friends," said he, "have had the kindness to send me this whole collection to look at. I am already acquainted with most of these fine things; but now I see them in the instructive arrangement of Winckelmann. I use his description, and consult him in cases where I am doubtful."

We had not long talked before the Chancellor came in. He told us the news from the public papers: among other things, of a keeper of a menagerie, who, out of a longing for lion's flesh, had killed a lion, and dressed a large piece of him.

"I wonder," said Goethe, "he did not rather try an ape; that would have been a tender relishing morsel."

We talked of the ugliness of these beasts, remarking that they were the more unpleasant the more they were like men.

"I do not understand," said the Chancellor, "how princes can keep these animals near them and even take pleasure in them."

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[1] Goethe had evidently succeeded in convincing Eckermann that the faults of genius are additional merits. The remark that follows the figure in the text is worthy of Mr. Puff in *The Critic*.

"Princes," said Goethe, "are so much tormented by disagreeable men that they regard these more disagreeable animals as a means of balancing the other unpleasant impressions. We common people naturally dislike apes and the screaming of parrots, because we see them in circumstances for which they were not made. If we could ride upon elephants among palm-trees, we should there find apes and parroquets quite in their place, perhaps pleasant. But, as I said, princes are right to drive away one repulsive thing with something still more repulsive.

"On this point," said he, "a scrap of verse occurs to me, which perhaps you do not remember:

> If men should ever beasts become,
> Bring only brutes into your room,
> And less disgust you'll surely feel:
> We all are Adam's children still."

Goethe laughed. "Yes," said he, "that is so. A coarseness can only be driven out by another that is stronger. I am reminded of an incident from my earlier time (when, among the aristocracy, here and there, were some very beastly gentlemen), that at table in a superior company and in presence of women, a rich nobleman used very clumsy language—to the embarrassment and vexation of all, who were obliged to hear him. There was nothing in mere terms by which he could be reproved. A determined, important-looking gentleman, who sat opposite him, therefore chose another means: he began very loudly a gross impropriety that frightened everybody, including that same boor, so that he felt quenched and did not open his mouth again. From that moment the conversation took a pleasant cheerful turn, to the happiness of all present; and that determined gentleman received much thanks for his unexampled courage, in consideration of the excellent result obtained."

After we had enjoyed this lively anecdote, the Chancellor turned the conversation on the present state of the opposition and the ministerial party at Paris; repeating, almost word for word, a powerful speech that an extremely bold democrat had made against the minister, in defending himself before a court of justice. We had an opportunity once more to marvel at the happy memory of the Chancellor. There was much conversation upon this subject, especially upon the censorship of the press, between Goethe and the Chancellor; the theme proved fertile, Goethe showing himself as usual a mild aristocrat, and his friend as usual apparently taking the side of the people.

"I have no fears for the French," said Goethe; "they stand on such a height from a world-historical point of view that their mind cannot by any means be suppressed. The law restraining the press can have only a beneficial effect; especially as its limitations concern nothing essential, but are only against personalities. An opposition that has no bounds is a flat affair; while limits sharpen its wits, and this is a great advantage. To speak out an opinion directly and coarsely is only excusable when one is perfectly right; but a party, for the very reason that it is a party, cannot be wholly in the right; therefore the indirect method in which the French have ever been great models is the best. I say to my servant plainly, 'Hans, pull off my boots,' and he understands; but if I am with a friend, and wish the service from him, I must not speak so bluntly, but must find some pleasant friendly way, to ask him to perform this kind office. This necessity excites my mind; and, for the same reason as I have said, I like some restraint upon the press. The French have always had the reputation of being the most *spirituel* of nations, and they ought to preserve it. We Germans speak out our opinions without ceremony, and have not acquired much skill in the indirect mode.

"The parties at Paris would be still greater if they were more liberal and free, and understood each other better. They stand on a higher grade, from a world-historical point of view, than the English; whose parliament consists of strong opposing powers that paralyse one another, and wherein the great penetration of an individual has a difficulty in working its way—as we see by Canning, and the many annoyances besetting that great statesman."

We rose to go, but Goethe was so full of life that the conversation was continued awhile standing. At last he bid us an affectionate farewell, and I accompanied the Chancellor home.

Sunday, July 15, 1827.

I went at eight o'clock this evening to see Goethe, whom I found just returned from his garden.

"See what lies there?" said he; "a romance, in three volumes; and by whom, think you? by Manzoni."

I looked at the books; which were very handsomely bound, and inscribed to Goethe. "Manzoni is industrious," said I. "Yes, there is movement there," said Goethe.

"I know nothing of Manzoni," said I, "except his ode to Napoleon, which I lately read again in your translation, and have admired. Each strophe is a picture."

"You are right," said Goethe, "the ode is excellent; but do you find anyone who speaks of it in Germany? It might as well not have existed, although it is the best poem made upon the subject."

Goethe continued reading the English newspapers, with which I had found him engaged when I came in. I took up that volume of Carlyle's translation of *German Romance* which contains Musæus and Fouqué. The Englishman, who is intimately acquainted with our literature, had prefixed to every translation a memoir and a criticism of the author. I read that upon Fouqué; remarking with pleasure that the biography was written with much thought and profundity, and that the critical point of view from which this favourite author was to be contemplated was indicated with great understanding and a tranquil penetration into poetic merits. At one time, the clever Englishman compares Fouqué to the voice of a singer that has no great compass and but few notes, but those few are good and beautifully melodious. To illustrate his meaning further, he takes a simile from ecclesiastical polity; saying that Fouqué does not hold in the poetic church the place of a bishop or dignitary of the first rank, but rather satisfies himself with the duties of a chaplain and looks very well in this humble station.

While I was reading this, Goethe had gone into the back chamber. He sent his servant, who invited me to come to him there.

Said he, "A new translation of Sophocles has arrived. It reads well, and seems to be excellent; I will compare it with Solger. Now, what say you to Carlyle?"

I told him what I had been reading upon Fouqué.

"Is not that very good?" said Goethe. "Aye, there are clever people over the sea, who know us and can appreciate us.

"In other departments," continued Goethe, "there is no lack of good heads even among us Germans. I have been reading, in the Berlin *Register*, the criticism of a historian upon Schlosser, which is very great. It is signed by Heinrich Leo, a person of whom I never heard but about whom we must inquire. He stands higher than the French—which, from a historical point of view, is saying something. They stick too much to the real, and cannot get the ideal into their heads; the German has this quite at his command. Leo has admirable views upon the castes of India. Much is said of aristocracy and democracy; but the whole affair is simply this: in youth, when we either possess nothing, or know not how to value tranquil possession, we are democrats; but when, in a long life, we have acquired property, we wish not only to be secure of it ourselves, but also that our children and grandchildren shall be secure of inheriting it, and quietly enjoying it. Therefore in old age we are always aristocrats, to whatever opinions we may have been inclined in youth. Leo speaks with a great deal of thought upon this point.

"We are weakest in the æsthetic department, and may wait long before we meet such a man as Carlyle. It is pleasant to see that intercourse is now so close among the French, English, and Germans, that we shall be able to correct one another. This is the greatest use of a world-literature, which will show itself more and more.

"Carlyle has written a life of Schiller, and judged him as it would be difficult for a German to judge him. On the other hand, we are clear about Shakespeare and Byron, and can perhaps appreciate their merits better than the English themselves."

Wednesday, July 18, 1827.

"I must announce to you," was Goethe's first salutation at dinner, "that Manzoni's novel soars far above all we know of the kind. I need say to you nothing more, except that the interior life—all that comes from the soul of the poet, is absolutely perfect; and that the outward—the delineation of localities, and the like, is in no way inferior. That is saying something." I was astonished and pleased to hear this. "In reading," continued Goethe, "we are constantly passing from emotion to admiration, and again from admiration to emotion; so that we are always subject to one of those great influences: higher than this, I think, we cannot go. In this novel we have first seen what Manzoni is. Here his perfect interior is exhibited, which he had no opportunity to display in his dramatic works. I will now read the best novel by Sir Walter Scott—perhaps *Waverley*, which I do not yet know—and I shall see how Manzoni will come out in comparison with this great English writer.

"Manzoni's internal culture here appears so high that scarcely anything can approach it. It satisfies us like perfectly ripe fruit. In his treatment and exhibition of details, he is as clear as the Italian sky itself."

"Has he any marks of sentimentality?" said I.

"He has sentiment," replied Goethe, "but is perfectly free from sentimentality; his feeling for every situation is manly and genuine. But I will say no more to-day. I am still in the first volume; soon you shall hear more."

Saturday, July 21, 1827.

When I came into Goethe's room this evening, I found him reading Manzoni's novel.

"I am in the third volume already," said he, as he laid aside the book, "and am thus getting many new thoughts. You know Aristotle says of tragedy, 'It must excite fear, if it is to be good.' This is true, not only of tragedy, but of many other sorts of poetry. You find it in my *Gott und die Bayadere*. You find it in every good comedy, even in the *Sieben Mädchen in Uniform* (Seven Girls in Uniform), as we do not know how the joke will turn out for the dear creatures.

"This fear may be of two sorts; it may exist in the shape of alarm (*Angst*), or in that of uneasiness (*Bangigkeit*). The latter feeling is awakened when we see a moral evil threatening and gradually overshadowing the personages; as, for instance, in the *Elective Affinities*. But alarm is awakened, in reader or spectator, when the personages are threatened with physical danger; as, for instance, in the *Galley Slave*, and in *Der Freyschütz*—nay, in the scene of the Wolf's-glen, not only alarm, but a sense of annihilation, is awakened in the spectators. Now, Manzoni makes use of this alarm with wonderful felicity, by resolving it into emotion, and thus leading us to admiration. Alarm is of a material character, and will be excited in every reader; but admiration is excited by a recognition of the writer's skill, and only the connoisseur will be blessed with this feeling. What say you to these æsthetics of mine? If I were younger, I would write something according to this theory, though perhaps not so extensive a work as this of Manzoni.

"I am now really curious to know what the gentlemen of the *Globe* will say to this novel. They are clever enough to perceive its excellences; and the whole tendency of the work is so much grist to the mill of these liberals, although Manzoni has shown himself very moderate. Nevertheless, the French seldom receive a work with such pure kindliness as we: they cannot readily adapt themselves to the author's point of view; but, even in the best, always find something not to their mind, which the author should have done otherwise."

Goethe then described some parts of the novel, to show me in what spirit it was written.

"There are four things," said he, "that have contributed especially to the excellence of Manzoni's works. First, he is an excellent historian, and consequently gives his inventions a depth and dignity which raise them far above what are commonly called novels. Secondly, the Catholic religion is favourable to him, giving him many poetical relations that he could not have had as a Protestant. Thirdly, it is to the advantage of the book that the author has suffered much in revolutionary collisions; which, if they did not affect *him*, have wounded his friends and sometimes ruined them. Fourthly, it is in favour of this novel that the scene is laid in the charming country near Lake Como, which has been stamped on the poet's mind from youth upwards and which he therefore knows by heart. Hence arises also that distinguishing merit of the work—its distinctness and wonderful accuracy in describing localities."

Monday, July 23, 1827.

When I asked for Goethe, about eight o'clock this evening, I heard that he had not yet returned from the garden. I therefore went to meet him, and found him in the park, sitting on a bench in the shade of the lindens; his grandson Wolfgang at his side. He motioned me to sit down by him. We had no sooner exchanged salutations, than the conversation again turned upon Manzoni.

"I told you lately," Goethe began, "that the historian had been of great use to the poet in this novel; but now, in the third volume, I find that the historian hurts the poet, for Signor Manzoni throws off at once the poet's mantle, and stands for some time as a naked historian. This happens in his descriptions of war, famine, and pestilence—things which are repulsive, and are now made insufferable by the circumstantial details of a dry chronicle.

"The German translator must seek to avoid this fault; he must get rid of a great part of the war and famine, and two-thirds of the plague, so as only to leave what is necessary to carry on the action. If Manzoni had had at his side a friendly adviser, he might easily have shunned this fault; but, as a historian, he had too great a respect for reality. This gives him trouble even in his dramatic works; where, however, he helps himself through by adding the superfluous historical matter in the shape of notes. Here, however, he could not get rid of his historical furniture in the same manner. This is very remarkable. Nevertheless, as soon as the persons of the romance reappear, the poet stands once more before us in all his glory, and compels us to our accustomed admiration."

We rose and walked towards the house.

"You will hardly understand," said Goethe, "how a poet like Manzoni, capable of such admirable compositions, could even for a moment sin against poetry. Yet the cause is simple —it is this: Manzoni, like Schiller, was a born poet; but our times are so bad, that the poet can find no nature fit for his use in the human life that surrounds him. To build himself up, Schiller seized on two great subjects, philosophy and history; Manzoni, on history alone. Schiller's *Wallenstein* is so great that there is nothing else like it of the same sort; yet you will find that even these two powerful helpers—history and philosophy—have injured parts of the work, and hinder a purely poetical success. So Manzoni suffers from too great a load of history."

"Your excellency," said I, "speaks great things, and I am happy in hearing you."

"Manzoni," said Goethe, "helps us to good thoughts."

He was proceeding with his remarks, when the Chancellor met us at the gate of Goethe's house-garden, and the conversation was then interrupted. He joined us as a welcome friend; and we accompanied Goethe up the little stairs, through the chamber of busts, into the long saloon, where the curtains were let down, and two lights were burning on the table near the window. We sat down by the table, and Goethe and the Chancellor talked upon subjects of another kind.

(Sup.) Wednesday, July 25, 1827.

Goethe has lately received a letter from Walter Scott, which has given him great pleasure. He showed it to me to-day; and, as the English handwriting was very illegible to him, he begged me to translate the contents to him. It appears that Goethe had first written to the renowned English poet, and that this letter was in reply.[1]

"I feel myself highly honoured," writes Walter Scott, "that any of my productions should have been so fortunate as to attract the attention of Goethe, to the number of whose admirers I have belonged since the year 1798, when, notwithstanding my slight knowledge of the German language, I was bold enough to translate into English the *Goetz von Berlichingen*. In this youthful undertaking, I had quite forgotten that it is not enough to feel the beauty of a work of genius, but that one must also thoroughly understand the language in which it is written before one can succeed in making such beauty apparent to others. Nevertheless, I still set some value on that youthful effort, because it at least shows that I knew how to choose a subject which was worthy of admiration.

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[1] What follows is a series of retranslations from the German translation of passages in Scott's letter. The original English text is printed (apparently not in full) in Lockhart's *Life of Scott*.

"I have often heard of you, through my son-in-law, Lockhart, a young man of literary eminence, who, some years before he became connected with my family, had the honour of being introduced to the father of German literature. It is impossible that you should recollect every individual of the great number of those who feel themselves urged to pay you their respects; but I believe no one is more heartily devoted to you than that young member of my family.

"My friend Sir John Hope, of Pinkie, has lately had the honour of seeing you, and I hoped to write to you by him; I afterwards took this liberty through two of his relations, who designed to travel over Germany; but illness prevented their putting their project into execution, so that after two or three months my letter returned to me. I also, at an earlier period, dared to seek Goethe's acquaintance, and that before the flattering notice which he has been so kind as to take of me.

"It is highly gratifying to all admirers of genius to know that one of the greatest European models enjoys a fortunate and honourable retreat, at an age when he sees himself respected in so remarkable a manner. Poor Lord Byron's destiny did not grant him so fortunate a lot, since it carried him off in the prime of life, and cut short all that had been hoped and expected from him. He esteemed himself fortunate in the honour which you paid him, and felt how much he was indebted to a poet to whom all the writers of the present generation owe so much, that they feel themselves bound to look up to him with child-like veneration.

"I have taken the liberty of requesting MM. Treuttel and Würtz to send to you my attempt at a biography of that remarkable man who for so many years had so terrible an influence in the world which he governed. Besides, I do not know whether I am not under some obligation to him, inasmuch as he made me carry arms for twelve years, during which time I served in a corps of our militia, and, in spite of a long-standing lameness, became a good horseman, huntsman, and shot. These good qualities have latterly a little forsaken me; rheumatism, that sad torment of our northern climate, having affected my limbs. However, I do not complain; for I see my sons join in the pleasures of the chase, since I have been obliged to give them up.

"My eldest son has a squadron of hussars, which is a great deal for a young man of five-and-twenty. My younger son has lately taken the degree of Bachelor of Arts at Oxford, and is now going to spend some months at home, before he enters into the world. As it has pleased God to take their mother from me, my youngest daughter manages my domestic affairs. My eldest daughter is married, and has a family of her own.

"This is the domestic condition of a man concerning whom you have so kindly inquired. For the rest, I possess enough to live quite as I wish, notwithstanding some very heavy losses. I inhabit a stately old mansion, where every friend of Goethe's will at all times be welcome. The hall is filled with armour, which would even have suited Jaxthausen; a large bloodhound guards the entrance.

"I have, however, forgotten him who contrived that people should not forget him while alive. I hope you will pardon the faults of the work, whilst you consider that the author was animated by the wish to treat the memory of this extraordinary man as sincerely as his island prejudices would allow.

"As this opportunity of writing to you has suddenly and accidentally been afforded me by a traveller, and admits of no delay, I have not time to say more, excepting that I wish you a continuance of good health and repose, and subscribe myself, with the most sincere and deepest esteem,

"Walter Scott.

"Edinburgh, July 9, 1827."

Goethe was, as I said, delighted with this letter. He was, however, of opinion that it paid him so much respect that he must put a great deal to the account of the courtesy of a man of rank and refined cultivation.

He then mentioned the good and affectionate manner in which Walter Scott spoke of his family connections, which pleased him highly, as a sign of brotherly confidence.

"I am really quite impatient," continued he, "for his *Life* *of Napoleon,* which he announces to me. I hear so many contradictions and vehement protestations concerning the book, that I am already certain it will, in any case, be very remarkable."

I asked about Lockhart, and whether he still recollected him.

"Perfectly well!" returned Goethe. "His personal appearance makes so decided an impression that one cannot easily forget him. From all I hear from Englishmen, and from my daughter-in-law, he must be a young man from whom great things in literature are to be expected.

"I almost wonder that Walter Scott does not say a word about Carlyle, who has so decided a German tendency that he must certainly be known to him.[1]

"It is admirable in Carlyle that, in his judgment of our German authors, he has especially in view the mental and moral core as that which is really influential. Carlyle is a moral force of great importance. There is in him much for the future."

Monday, September 24, 1827.

I went with Goethe to Berka. We drove off soon after eight o'clock; the morning was very beautiful. The road is uphill at first; and, as there was nothing in the scenery worth looking at, Goethe talked on literary subjects. A well-known German poet had lately passed through Weimar, and shown Goethe his album.

"You cannot imagine what stuff it contains," said Goethe. "All the poets write as if they were ill and the whole world were a lazaretto. They all speak of the woe and the misery of this earth and of the joys of a hereafter; all are discontented, and one draws the other into a state of still greater discontent. This is a real abuse of poetry, which was given to us to hide the little discords of life and to make man contented with the world and his condition. But the present generation is afraid of all such strength, and only feels poetical when it has weakness to deal with.

"I have hit on a good word," continued Goethe, "to tease these gentlemen. I will call their poetry 'Lazaretto-poetry,' and I will give the name of Tyrtæan-poetry to that which not only sings war-songs, but also arms men with courage to undergo the conflicts of life."

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[1] "Carlyle never spoke to Scott, as he hoped to do; nor did Sir Walter even acknowledge his letter."—FROUDE: *Thomas Carlyle: The First Forty Years*, i, 432.

At the bottom of the carriage lay a basket made of rushes, with two handles, which attracted my attention. "I brought it with me from Marienbad," said Goethe, "where there are baskets of the sort of every size; and I am so accustomed to it that I cannot travel without it. You see, when it is empty it folds up, and occupies but little room; but when it is full it stretches out very wide, and holds more than you would imagine. It is soft and pliant, and at the same time so tough and strong that the heaviest things can be carried in it."

"It has a very picturesque and even an antique appearance," said I.

"You are right," said Goethe; "it does approach the antique character: since it is not only as fit for its purpose as possible; but also has the simplest and most pleasing form—so that we may say it stands on the highest point of perfection. During my mineralogical excursions in the Bohemian mountains, I found it especially serviceable; now, it contains our breakfast. If I had a hammer, I should not lack an opportunity to-day to knock off a piece here and there, and bring home the basket full of stones."

We had now reached the heights, and had a free prospect towards the hills behind which Berka lies. A little to the left we saw into the valley that leads to Hetschburg, and where, on the other side of the Ilm, is a hill which now turned towards us its shadowy side and (on account of the vapours of the valley which hovered before it) seemed blue to my eye. I looked at the same spot through my glass, and the blue was obviously diminished. I observed this to Goethe. "Thus you see," said I, "what a great part the subject plays with these purely objective colours; a weak eye increases the density, while a sharpened one drives it away or at any rate makes it diminish."

"Your remark is correct," said Goethe; "a good telescope dispels the blue tint of the most distant mountains. The subject is, in all the phenomena, far more important than is supposed. Even Wieland knew this very well; for he was wont to say, 'People could easily be amused, if they were only amusable.' "

We laughed at the pleasant meaning of these words. We had meanwhile descended the little valley where the road passes over a roofed wooden bridge, under which the rain-torrents that flow down to Hetschburg had made a channel, which was now dry. Highway labourers were employed in setting up against the bridge some reddish sandstones, which attracted Goethe's attention. About a stone's throw over the bridge, where the road goes gradually up the hill that separates the traveller from Berka, Goethe bade the coachman stop.

"We will get out here," said he, "and see whether we shall not relish a little breakfast in the open air."

We got out and looked about us. The servant spread a napkin upon a four-cornered pile of stones, such as usually lie by the roadside, and brought the osier basket from the carriage, out of which he took roast partridges, new wheaten rolls, and pickled cucumbers. Goethe cut a partridge, and gave me half; I ate, standing up and walking about. Goethe had seated himself on the corner of a heap of stones. The coldness of the stones, on which the night-dew was still resting, must hurt him, I thought; and I expressed my anxiety. Goethe, however, assured me it would not hurt him at all; and then I felt quite tranquil, regarding it as a new token of the inward strength he must feel. Meanwhile the servant had brought a bottle of wine from the carriage, and filled for us.

"Our friend Schütze," said Goethe, "is right to fly to the country every week; we will take pattern by him; and, if this fine weather continue for a while, this shall not be our last excursion."

I passed, afterwards, with Goethe, a most interesting day, partly in Berka, partly in Tonndorf. He talked much of the second part of *Faust*, on which he was just beginning to work in earnest; I therefore lament so much the more that nothing is noted down in my journal beyond this introduction.

(Sup.) Wednesday, September 26, 1827.

Goethe had invited me to take a drive this morning to the Hottelstedt Ecke, the most westerly summit of the Ettersberg, and thence to the Ettersberg hunting-lodge. The day was very fine, and we drove early out of the Jacob's gate. Behind Lützendorf, where the journey was uphill, and we could only drive leisurely, we had good opportunity for looking round us. Goethe noticed in the hedges a number of birds, and asked me if they were larks. Thou great and beloved one, thought I, though thou hast studied nature as few have, in ornithology thou appearest a mere child!

"These are yellow-hammers and sparrows," returned I, "and some late Gras-Mücken,[1] which, after moulting, come from the thicket of the Ettersberg down to the gardens and fields, and prepare for their migration; but there are no larks. It is not in the nature of larks to settle upon bushes. The field-larks or sky-larks rise upwards and dart down again to the earth; they also in the autumn fly through the air in flocks, and settle themselves somewhere in a stubble-field—they do not settle upon hedges and bushes. But the tree-lark lives on the summit of high trees; it rises singing into the air, and drops down again to its tree-top. There is still another lark, found in woodland glades, with a soft flute-like, but rather melancholy, song. It is not found on the Ettersberg, which is too lively and too near the dwellings of man; neither does it perch upon bushes."

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[1] Hedge-sparrows, warblers.

"Hm!" said Goethe, "you appear to be no novice in these things."

"I have thoroughly studied the subject from boyhood," said I, "and have always had my eyes and ears open. In the whole wood of the Ettersberg there are few spots through which I have not rambled repeatedly. Now, when I hear any note, I can venture to say from what bird it comes. I have also gone so far that, if anyone brings me a bird that has lost its feathers in captivity through bad treatment, I can restore it to health and full feather."

"Tell me something about moulting. You just now spoke of Gras-Mücken, which, after the completion of their moulting, come down into the fields from the thickets of the Ettersberg. Is moulting, then, confined to a certain time, and do all birds moult at once?"

"Most birds," said I, "commence at the end of the breeding season; that is, as soon as the young of the last brood can take care of themselves. But now the question is, whether the bird has time to moult between this period and that of its migration? If it has, it moults, and migrates with fresh feathers; if it has not, it migrates with its old feathers, and moults later in the warm south. Birds do not all return to us at the same time in spring; neither do they migrate at the same time in autumn. And this is because some are less affected by cold and rough weather and can bear it better than others. But a bird that comes to us early migrates late, and a bird that comes to us late migrates early.

"Thus, even amongst the Gras-Mücken, though they belong to one class, there is a great difference. The chattering Gras-Mücke, or the Müller-chen,[1] are heard at the end of March; a fortnight after comes the black-headed one, or the monk (*Mönch*); then, a week afterwards, the nightingale; and quite at the end of April or the beginning of May, the grey one. All these birds moult in August with us, as well as the young of the first brood; wherefore, at the end of August, young monks that have already black heads are caught. The young of the last brood, however, migrate with their first feathers, and moult later in the southern countries; for which reason young monks caught at the beginning of September, especially young male birds, have red heads like their mother."

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[1] The lesser whitethroats. Literally, "little millers."

"Is, then," he asked, "the grey Gras-Mücke the latest bird that returns to us, or are there others later?"

"The so-called yellow *spott-vogel* (mocking-bird), and the magnificent golden Pirol (yellow thrush)," said I, "do not appear till about Whitsuntide. Both migrate in the middle of August, after the breeding season, and moult with their young in the south. If kept in cages, they moult with us in the winter; so that they are very difficult to rear. They require much warmth, yet if we hang them near the stove they pine from the want of fresh air; while, if we place them near the window, they pine in the cold of the long nights."

"It is supposed, then," said Goethe, "that moulting is a disease, or at least is attended by bodily weakness?"

"I would not say that," said I. "It is a state of increased productiveness, which is gone through without difficulty in the open air, and with robust birds perfectly well in a room. I have had Gras-Mücken that have not ceased singing during their moulting, a sign that they were thoroughly well. But if a bird kept in a room appears at all sickly during its moulting, it may be concluded that it has not been properly treated—with respect to food, water, or fresh air. If a bird kept in a room has grown so weak from want of air and freedom that it has not the productive power to moult, and if it is then taken into the fruitful fresh air, the moulting will go on as well as possible. With a bird at liberty, it passes off so gently and gradually that it is scarcely felt."

"But, still, you just now seemed to hint that during their moulting the Gras-Mücken retire into the depths of the forest."

"During that time," said I, "they certainly need shelter; and in this case Nature proceeds with such wisdom and moderation that a bird during its moulting never loses so many feathers at once as to render it incapable of flying well enough to reach its food. But it may still happen that it loses, for instance, at the same time the fourth, fifth, and sixth principal feathers of the left wing, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth feathers of the right one; so that, although it can still fly very well, it cannot fly well enough to escape from the pursuing birds of prey—especially the swift and active tree falcon—and then a bushy thicket is very useful."

"Good! But does the moulting take place in both wings equally and symmetrically?"

"As far as my observation goes—yes; and that is very beneficial. For if a bird lost, for instance, three principal feathers from the left wing and not so many from the right, the wings would be without equilibrium, and the bird would have no proper control over its movements. It would be like a ship the sails of which are too heavy on one side and too light on the other."

"I see," said Goethe, "we may penetrate into Nature on whatever side we please, and always come to some wisdom."

We were meanwhile continually going uphill, and were now on the edge of a pine wood. We came to a place where some stones had been broken and lay in a heap. Goethe told the coachman to stop, and begged me to alight and see if I could discover any fossils. I found some shells, and also some broken ammonites, which I handed to him when I again took my seat. We drove on.

"Always the old story," said Goethe; "always the old bed of the sea! Looking down from this height upon Weimar, and upon the numerous villages around, it appears wonderful to think that there was a time when whales sported in the broad valley below. And yet there was such a time—at least it is highly probable. But the mew that flew over the sea that then covered this mountain certainly never thought that we two should drive here to-day. And who knows whether, in some thousands of years, the mew may not again fly over this mountain?"

We were now upon the height, and drove quickly along. On our right were oaks, beeches, and other leafy trees: Weimar was behind us, but out of sight. We had reached the western height—the broad valley of the Unstrut, with many villages and small towns, lay before us, in the clearest morning sun.

"This is a good resting-place," said Goethe. "I think we may as well try how a little breakfast would suit us in this good air."

We alighted, and walked up and down for a few minutes upon the dry earth, at the foot of some half-grown oaks stunted by many storms; while Frederick unpacked the breakfast we had brought with us, and spread it upon a turfy hillock. The view from this spot, in the clear morning light of the autumn sun, was magnificent: on the south and south-west, the whole range of the Thüringer-wald mountains; on the west, beyond Erfurt, the towering Castle Gotha and the Inselsberg; farther north, the mountains behind Langensalza and Mühlhausen, until the view was bounded on the north by the blue Hartz Mountains. I thought of the verses:

Far, high, splendid the view,
Around into life!
From mountain to mountain,
Soars the eternal spirit,
Presaging endless life.

We seated ourselves with our backs against the oak; so that during breakfast we had before us the view over half Thüringia. Meanwhile we demolished a brace of roast partridges, with new white bread, and drank a flask of very good wine out of a cup of pure gold that Goethe carried with him on such excursions in a yellow leather case.

"I have very often been in this spot," said he, "and of late years I have often thought it would be the last time that I should look down hence on the kingdoms of the world, and their glories; but it has happened once again, and I hope that even this is not the last time we shall both spend a pleasant day here. We will in future often come hither. Man shrinks in the narrow confinement of the house. Here he feels great and free—as the great scene he has before his eyes, and as he ought properly always to be.

"From this spot," continued Goethe, "I look down upon many points bound up with the richest recollections of a long life. What have I not, in my youth, gone through yonder in the mountains of Ilmenau? Then, how many adventures have I had down below there, in dear Erfurt! In early times, too, I often liked to be at Gotha; but for many years I have scarcely been there at all."

"While I have been in Weimar, I do not recollect your being there."

"There is a reason for that," he said, laughing. "I am not in the best favour there. When the mother of the present ruler was in the bloom of youth, I was very often there. I was sitting one evening alone with her at the tea-table, when the two princes, ten and twelve years old—two pretty fair-haired boys—burst in and came to the table. I was audacious enough to put a hand through the hair of each prince, with the words, '*Now, you floury heads, what do you want?*' The boys stared in the greatest astonishment at my boldness, and they have never forgotten the affair! I will not boast of it now; but it was instinctive. I never had much respect for mere princely rank as such, when there was not behind it sound human nature and worth. I felt so satisfied with myself, that if I had been made a prince I should not have thought the change so very remarkable. When the diploma of nobility was given me, many thought I should feel elevated; but, between ourselves, it was nothing to me! We Frankfort patricians always considered ourselves equal to the nobility; and when I held the diploma in my hands I had nothing more, in my own opinion, than I had possessed long ago."

We took another good draught from the golden cup, and then drove round the northern side of the Ettersberg to the Ettersberg hunting-lodge. Goethe had all the chambers that were hung with beautiful tapestry and pictures opened. He told me Schiller had for some time inhabited the chamber at the western angle of the first story.

"In early times," continued he, "we have here spent many a good day, and wasted many a good day. We were all young and wanton: in the summer we had impromptu comedies, and in the winter many a dance and sledge-race by torchlight."

We returned into the open air, and Goethe led me in a westerly direction along a footpath into the wood.

"I will show you the beech," said he, "on which we cut our names fifty years ago. But how it has altered, and how everything has grown! That must be the tree; you see it is still in fullest vigour. Even our names are still to be traced; but confused and distorted, scarcely to be made out. This beech then stood upon a dry open spot. It was quite sunny and pleasant around; and here, in the beautiful summer evenings, we played our impromptu farces. Now the spot is damp and cheerless. What were then only low bushes have now grown up into shady trees, so that in the thicket the magnificent beech of our youth can hardly be distinguished."

We returned to the lodge; and, after we had seen the rich collection of arms, we drove back to Weimar.

(Sup.) Thursday, September 27, 1827.

This afternoon spent a short time with Goethe; when I made the acquaintance of Privy-Councillor Streckfuss of Berlin, who had taken a drive with him in the forenoon and had then stayed to dinner. When Streckfuss went, I accompanied him, and took a walk through the park. On my return across the market-place, I met the Chancellor and Raupach, with whom I went into the "Elephant." In the evening I returned to Goethe, who talked with me about a new number of *Kunst und Alterthum*, and also about a dozen pencil-drawings, in which the brothers Riepenhausen endeavoured to represent the painting of Polygnotus in the Lesche at Delphi, according to the description of Pausanias—an attempt Goethe could not sufficiently praise.

(Sup.) Monday, October 1, 1827.

At the theatre, *Das Bild* (The Picture), by Houwald. I saw two acts, and then went to Goethe, who read to me the second scene of his new *Faust*.

"In the emperor," said he, "I have endeavoured to represent a prince who has all the necessary qualities for losing his land, and at last succeeds in so doing. He does not concern himself about the welfare of his kingdom and his subjects; he only thinks of himself and how he can amuse himself with something new. The land is without law and justice; the judge is on the side of the criminals; atrocious crimes are committed with impunity. The army is without pay, without discipline, and roams about plundering to help itself as it can. The state treasury is empty, and without hope of replenishment. In the emperor's own household, there is scarcity in both kitchen and cellar. The marshal, who cannot devise means to get on from day to day, is already in the hands of the Jews; to whom everything is pawned, so that bread already eaten [1] comes to the emperor's table.

"The counsellor of state wishes to remonstrate with his Majesty upon all these evils, and advises as to their remedy; but the gracious sovereign is very unwilling to lend his sublime ear to anything so disagreeable. Here now is the true element for Mephisto, who quickly supplants the former fool, and is at once at the side of the emperor as fool and counsellor."

Goethe read the scene and the interspersed murmuring of the crowd excellently, and I had a very pleasant evening.

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[1] Or "bread eaten in anticipation" ("Vorweggegessenes Brod").

(Sup.) Sunday, October 7, 1827.

This morning, the weather being very beautiful, I found myself in the chariot with Goethe before eight o'clock: on the road to Jena, where he intended to stay until the next evening.

Having arrived there early, we first called at the botanical garden, where Goethe surveyed all the shrubs and plants, and found them all thriving and in beautiful order. We also looked over the mineralogical cabinets and some other collections of natural objects, and then drove to Herr von Knebel's, where we were expected to dinner.

Knebel, who was very old, almost stumbled towards Goethe at the door, to fold him in his arms. At dinner all were very lively and hearty, although there was no conversation of any importance. The two old friends were enough occupied with the pleasure of friendly meeting. After dinner we took a drive in a southerly direction, up the Saale. I had known this charming region in earlier times, but everything appeared as fresh as if I had never seen it before.

When we returned into the streets of Jena, Goethe gave orders to drive along a brook, and to stop at a house whose outside was not very striking.

"This was the dwelling of Voss," said he, "and I will conduct you on this classic ground." We walked through the house, and entered the garden. There were but few traces of flowers and the finer species of culture; we walked on the turf all covered with fruit trees.

"This was something for Ernestine," said Goethe, "who could not even here forget her excellent Eutiner apples, which she told me were incomparable. But they were the apples of her childhood, there was the charm! I have spent many pleasant evenings here with Voss and his excellent Ernestine, and I still like to think of the old time. Such a man as Voss will not soon come again. There are few who have had such influence upon the higher German culture. With him everything was sound and solid; he had, not an artificial, but a purely natural relation to the Greeks, which produced the noblest fruits for us. One so penetrated with his worth as I am scarcely knows how to honour his memory enough."

It was by this time about six o'clock, and Goethe considered it time to go to our night quarters which he had bespoken at the "Bear."

We were accommodated with a roomy chamber, together with an alcove containing two beds. The sun had not long set—the evening light reposed upon our windows, and it was pleasant to sit for some time without a candle.

Goethe brought the conversation back to Voss. "He was very valuable to me," said he, "and I would willingly have retained him for the University and myself; but the advantages offered from Heidelberg were too important for us, with our limited means, to outweigh them. I was mournfully resigned to let him go. It was fortunate for me that I had Schiller; for, different as our natures were, our tendencies were still towards one point, which made our connection so intimate that one really could not live without the other.

"Schiller was a decided enemy to all the hollow reverence and all the vain idolatry people paid him or wished to pay him. When Kotzebue proposed to get up a public demonstration in his house, it was so distasteful to him that he was almost ill with disgust. It was repulsive to him when a stranger was announced. If he were hindered a moment and made an appointment, at the appointed hour he was ill from mere apprehension: he could now and then be very impatient, sometimes even rude. I was witness of his impetuous conduct towards a foreign surgeon, who entered unannounced to pay him a visit. The poor man, quite put out of countenance, did not know how he could retreat rapidly enough.

"We were, as I have said, very different in our natures—not merely in mental, but also in physical matters. An air beneficial to Schiller acted on me like poison. I called on him one day; and, as I did not find him at home, and his wife told me that he would soon return, I seated myself at his work-table to make some notes. I had not been seated long before I felt queer. The feeling gradually increased, until at last I nearly fainted. At first I did not know to what cause to ascribe this wretched, and to me unusual, state—until I discovered that a dreadful odour issued from a drawer near me. When I opened it, I found to my astonishment it was full of rotten apples. I went to the window and inhaled fresh air, by which I was instantly restored. In the meantime his wife had re-entered, and told me that the drawer was always filled with rotten apples, because the scent was beneficial to Schiller, and he could not live or work without it.

"To-morrow morning," continued Goethe, "I will also show you where Schiller lived in Jena."

In the meantime lights were brought in; we took a little supper, and afterwards sat engaged in various conversations and recollections.

I related a wonderful dream of my boyish years, which was literally fulfilled the next morning.

"I had," said I, "brought up three young linnets, which flew about my chamber, and came and settled on my hand as soon as I entered. One day at noon, on my entrance into the chamber, one of the birds flew over me, out of the house. I sought it the whole afternoon, on all the roofs, and was inconsolable when evening came and I had discovered no traces of it. I went to sleep with sad thoughts in my heart, and towards morning I dreamt I was roaming about the neighbouring houses in search of my lost bird. All at once I heard the sound of its voice, and saw it behind the garden of our cottage, upon the roof of a neighbour's house. I called to it, and it approached, moved its wings as if asking for food, but still it could not venture to fly down. I ran through our garden into my chamber, and returned with the cup of soaked rape-seed; I held the favourite food towards it, and it perched upon my hand. Full of joy, I carried it back into my chamber to the other two.

"I awoke; and, as it was then broad daylight, I quickly put on my clothes, and with the utmost haste ran down through our little garden to the house where I had seen the bird. The bird was really there! Everything happened as I had seen it in the dream. I called, it approached, but it hesitated to fly to my hand. I ran back and brought the food; when it flew upon my hand, and I took it back to the others."

"This boyish adventure of yours," said Goethe, "is certainly very remarkable. But there are many such things in nature, though we have not the right key to them. We all walk in mysteries. We do not know what is stirring in the atmosphere that surrounds us, nor how it is connected with our own spirit. So much is certain—that at times we can put out the feelers of our soul beyond its bodily limits; and a presentiment, an actual insight into the immediate future, is accorded to it."

"I have lately experienced something similar," said I. "As I was returning from a walk along the Erfurt road, about ten minutes before I reached Weimar, I had the mental impression that a person whom I had not seen, and of whom I had not even thought for a length of time, would meet me at the corner of the theatre. It troubled me to think that this person might meet me; and great was my surprise when, as I was about to turn the corner, this very person actually met me, in the same place which I had seen in my imagination ten minutes before."

"That is also very wonderful, and more than chance," said he. "As I said, we are all groping among mysteries and wonders. Besides, one soul may have a decided influence upon another, merely by means of its silent presence, of which I could relate many instances. It has often happened to me that, when I have been walking with an acquaintance, and have had a living image of something in my mind, he has at once begun to speak of that very thing. I have also known a man who, without saying a word, could suddenly silence a party engaged in cheerful conversation, by the mere power of his mind. Nay, he could also introduce a tone which would make everybody feel uncomfortable. We have all some electrical and magnetic forces within us; and we put forth, like the magnet itself, an attractive or repulsive power, as we come in contact with something similar or dissimilar. It is possible, even probable, that if a young girl were, without knowing it, to find herself in a dark chamber with a man who designed to murder her, she would have an uneasy sense of his unknown presence, and that an anguish would come over her, which would drive her from the room to the rest of the household."

"I know a scene in an opera," said I, "in which two lovers who have long been separated by a great distance, find themselves together in a dark room without knowing it; but they do not remain long together before the magnetic power begins to work; one feels the proximity of the other—they are involuntarily attracted towards each other—and it is not long before the girl is clasped in the arms of the youth."

"With lovers," answered Goethe, "this magnetic power is particularly strong and acts even at a distance. In my younger days I have experienced cases enough, when, during solitary walks, I have felt a great desire for the company of a beloved girl, and have thought of her till she has really come to meet me. 'I was so restless in my room,' she has said, 'that I could not help coming here.'

"I recollect an instance during the first years of my residence here, where I soon fell in love again. I had taken a long journey, and had returned some days; but, being detained late at night by court affairs, I had not been able to visit my mistress; besides, our mutual affection had already attracted attention, and I was afraid to pay my visits by day, lest I should increase the common talk. On the fourth or fifth evening, however, I could resist no longer; and I was on the road to her, and stood before her house, before I had thought of it. I went softly upstairs, and was upon the point of entering her room, when I heard, by the different voices, that she was not alone. I went down again unnoticed, and was quickly in the dark streets—they had no lighting in those days. In an impassioned and angry mood I roamed the town in all directions, for about an hour, and passed the house once more, full of passionate thoughts of my beloved. At last I was on the point of returning to my solitary room, when I once more went past her house, and remarked that she had no light. 'She must have gone out,' said I to myself, 'but whither, in this dark night? and where shall I meet her?' I afterwards went through many streets—I met many people, and was often deceived, as I often fancied I saw her form and size; but, on nearer approach found it was not she. I then firmly believed in a strong mutual influence, and that I could attract her to me by a strong desire. I also believed myself surrounded by invisible beings of a higher order, whom I entreated to direct her steps to me, or mine to her. 'But what a fool thou art!' I then said to myself; 'thou wilt not seek her and go to her again, and yet thou desirest signs and wonders!'

"In the meantime I had gone down the esplanade, and had reached the small house where Schiller afterwards lived, when it occurred to me to turn back towards the palace and then to go down a little street to the right. I had scarcely taken a hundred steps in this direction when I saw coming towards me a female form perfectly resembling her I expected. The street was faintly lighted by weak rays that now and then shone from a window; and, since I had been already often deceived in the course of the evening with an apparent resemblance, I did not feel courage to speak to her. We passed quite close to each other, so that our arms touched. I stood still and looked about me; she did the same. 'Is it you?' said she, and I recognized her voice. 'At last!' said I, and was enraptured even to tears. Our hands clasped each other. 'Now,' said I, 'my hopes have not deceived me; I have sought you with the greatest eagerness; my feelings told me that I should certainly find you; now I am happy, and I thank God that my forebodings have proved true.' 'But, you wicked one!' said she, 'why did you not come? I heard to-day, by chance, that you had been back three days, and I have wept the whole afternoon, because I thought you had forgotten me. Then, an hour ago, I was seized with a longing and uneasiness on your account, such as I cannot describe. There were two female friends with me, whose visit appeared interminable. At last, when they were gone, I seized my hat and cloak, and was impelled to go out into the air and darkness, I knew not whither; you were constantly in my mind, and I could not help thinking I should meet you.' While she thus spoke truly from her heart, we still held each other's hands and pressed them, and gave each other to understand that absence had not cooled our love. I accompanied her to her door, and into the house. She went up the dark stairs before me, holding my hand and drawing me after her. My happiness was indescribable; both because I at last saw her again, and also because I had not been deluded in my sense of an invisible influence."

(Sup.) Jena, Monday, October 8, 1827.

We arose early. While we were dressing, Goethe related to me a dream of the previous night, in which he imagined himself at Göttingen, where he had pleasant conversations with the professors of his acquaintance.

We drank a few cups of coffee, and then drove to the museum. We saw the anatomical cabinet; various skeletons of animals, modern and primeval; as well as skeletons of men of former ages, on which Goethe remarked that their teeth showed them to have been a very moral race. We then drove to the observatory, where Dr. Schrön showed and explained to us the most important instruments. We also examined the adjacent meteorological cabinet with great interest, and Goethe praised Dr. Schrön for the order in which all was kept.

We then went down into the garden, where Goethe had caused a little breakfast to be laid upon a stone table in an arbour. "You won't guess," said Goethe, "in what remarkable place we are seated. Schiller dwelt here. In this arbour, upon these benches which are now almost broken, we have often sat at this old stone table, and have had great talks. He was then in his thirties, I in my forties; both were full of aspirations, and indeed it was fine. Everything passes away—I am no more what I was: but the old earth still remains; and air, water, and land, are still the same.

"Afterwards you shall go upstairs with Schrön, who will show you the room in the mansarde that Schiller occupied."

In the meantime we relished our breakfast in this pleasant air and on this delightful spot. Schiller was present in our minds at least; and Goethe had for him many words of affectionate remembrance.

I then went with Schrön to the mansarde, and enjoyed the magnificent prospect from Schiller's windows. The direction was due south; so that there was a view of the beautiful stream, interrupted by thickets and windings, flowing along for miles. There was also a wide expanse of sky. The rising and setting of the planets were admirably observable; and obviously this was the very place for the conception of the astronomical and astrological part of *Wallenstein*.

I returned to Goethe, who drove to Hofrath Döbereiner; whom he highly esteems, and who showed him some new chemical experiments.

It was by this time noon. We were again seated in the carriage.

"I think," said Goethe, "we will not return to the 'Bear,' to dinner; but will enjoy the splendid day in the open air. I think we will go to Burgau. We have wine with us; and in any case we shall find there some good fish, which can be either boiled or broiled."

We did so, and the plan proved splendid. We drove along the bank of the Saale, by the thickets and the windings, the pleasantest way, as I had already seen from Schiller's mansarde. We were soon in Burgau. We alighted at the little inn near the river and the bridge where there is a crossing to Lobeda, a little town close before our eyes across the meadows.

At the inn we found all as Goethe had said. The hostess apologized for having nothing prepared; but said we should have some soup and some good fish.

In the meantime we walked in the sunshine, up and down the bridge, amusing ourselves by looking at the river, which was animated by raftsmen; who, upon planks of pine-wood bound together, glided under the bridge and were very noisy and merry over their troublesome wet work.

We ate our fish in the open air, and then remained sitting over a little wine, and had all sorts of pleasant conversation. A small hawk, which in flight and form bore a strong resemblance to the cuckoo, flew past.

"There was once," said Goethe, "a universal belief that the cuckoo was a cuckoo only in summer, and in winter a bird of prey."

"This opinion still exists amongst the people," said I. "And it is also laid to the charge of this good bird, that as soon as it is full grown it devours its own parents. It is therefore used as a metaphor for shameful ingratitude. I know people at the present moment who will not allow themselves to be talked out of these absurdities, and who cling to them as firmly as to any article of their Christian belief."

"As far as I know," said Goethe, "the cuckoo is classed with the woodpecker."

"That is sometimes done, probably because two of the toes of its weak feet have a backward inclination. I, however, should not so class it. For the woodpecker's life it has neither the strong beak capable of breaking the decayed bark of a tree, nor the sharp and very strong tail-feathers to support it during the operation. Its toes, also, want the sharp claws necessary to sustain it; so I consider its small feet as not actually but only apparently made for climbing."

"The ornithologists," added Goethe, "are probably delighted when they have brought any peculiar bird under some head; still, Nature carries on her own free sport, without troubling herself with the classes marked out by limited men." [1]

"The nightingale, too," I continued, "is numbered amongst the Gras-Mücken; whilst in the energy of its nature, its movements, and its mode of life, it bears far more resemblance to the thrush. Still, I would not class it among the thrushes. It is a bird between the two; a bird by itself, as the cuckoo is a bird by itself, with a strongly-marked individuality."

"All that I have heard concerning the cuckoo," said Goethe, "excites in me a great interest in this wonderful bird. It is a manifest mystery, but not the less difficult to interpret because it is so manifest. And with how many things do we not find ourselves in the same predicament? We stand in mere wonderment, and the best part of things is closed to us. Let us take the bees. We see them fly for miles after honey, and always in a different direction. Now they fly westward for a week, to a field of flowering rape-seed; then, for a long time, northward, to a flowering heath; then in another direction to the blossom of the buckwheat; then somewhere else, to a flowering clover-field; and at last, in some other direction, to a blossoming lime. But who has said to them, 'Now fly thither, there is something for you'? and 'Now thither, there is something fresh'? And who has led them back to their village and their cell? They go hither and thither, as if in invisible leading-strings;

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[1] If this is correctly reported, Goethe had no idea of any connection between classification and the determination of common ancestry.

but what these really are we do not know. It is the same with the lark. She rises, singing, from a cornfield; she soars over a sea of corn, which the wind blows backwards and forwards, and in which one wave looks like the other; she then returns to her young, and drops down, without fail, on the little spot where her nest is placed. All these outward things are as clear as the day to us; but their inward, spiritual tie is concealed."

"The same with the cuckoo," said I. "We know it does not brood itself, but lays its egg in the nest of some other bird. We know, furthermore, that it lays it in the nest of the Gras-Mücke, the yellow wagtail, the monk; also in the nests of the Braunelle, the robin, and the wren. We also know that these are all insect-eating birds; and must be so, because the cuckoo itself is an insect-eating bird and the young cuckoo cannot be brought up by a seed-eating bird. But how does the cuckoo find out that these are all actually insect-eating birds? For all the above-mentioned birds differ extremely from each other, in both form and colour, and also in song and call-note. Further, how comes it that the cuckoo can trust its egg and its tender young to nests as different as possible in structure, temperature, dryness, and moisture? The nest of the Gras-Mücke is built so lightly, with dry hay and horsehair, that all cold penetrates into it, and every breeze blows through it; it is also open at the top, and without shelter; still, the young cuckoo thrives in it excellently. The nest of the wren, on the other hand, is on the outside built firmly and thickly, with moss, straw, and leaves, and carefully lined within with wool and feathers; so that not a breeze can pierce through. It is also covered at the top, and arched over, only a small aperture being left for the very small birds to slip in and out. It might be thought that in the hot days of June the heat in such an enclosed hole must be suffocating; but the young cuckoo thrives there best. Then how different is the nest of the yellow wagtail. This bird lives by brooks and in various damp places. It builds its nest upon damp commons, in a tuft of rushes. It scrapes a hole in the moist earth, and lines it scantily with some blades of grass—so that the young cuckoo is hatched, and must grow up, in the damp and cold; and still it thrives excellently. But what a bird this must be, to which, at the most tender age, varieties of heat and cold, dryness and damp, which would be fatal to any other bird, are indifferent. And how does the old cuckoo know that they are so, when it is so susceptible to damp and cold at an advanced age?"

"This is a mystery," said Goethe; "but tell me, if you have observed it, how the cuckoo places its egg in the nest of the wren, when this has so small an opening that she cannot enter and sit upon it."

"The cuckoo lays it upon a dry spot, and takes it to the nest with her beak. I believe, too, that she does this not only with the wren's nest, but with every other. For the nests of the other insect-eating birds, even when they are open at the top, are still so small or so closely surrounded by twigs that the great long-tailed cuckoo cannot sit upon them. But how it happens that the cuckoo lays so unusually small an egg, so small that it might be the egg of a small insect-eating bird, is a new riddle which one may silently admire without being able to guess. The egg of the cuckoo is only a little larger than that of the Gras-Mücke; indeed, it ought not to be larger, as it has to be hatched by the small insect-eating birds. That Nature should deviate from a great pervading law according to which there exists a certain proportion between the size of the egg and that of the bird—from the humming-bird to the ostrich—is astonishing."

"It certainly astonishes us," said Goethe, "because our point of view is too small to allow us to comprehend. If more were revealed, we should probably find that these apparent deviations are really within the compass of the law. But go on, and tell me something more. Is it known how many eggs the cuckoo lays?"

"Whoever tried to say anything definite on that point would be a great blockhead. The bird is very fleeting. She is now here, now there; there is never more than one of her eggs found in a single nest. She certainly lays several; but who knows where these are, and who could look for them? But, supposing that she lays five eggs, and that all these are properly hatched and brought up by affectionate foster-parents, we must still wonder that Nature can resolve to sacrifice at least fifty of the young of our best singing birds for five young cuckoos."

"As elsewhere," returned Goethe, "Nature does not seem very scrupulous. She has a good fund of life to lavish, and does so now and then without much hesitation. But how does it happen that so many young singing birds are lost for a single young cuckoo?"

"In the first place," I replied, "the first brood is generally lost; for even if it should happen that the eggs of the singing bird are hatched at the same time with that of the cuckoo, which is very probable, the parents are so much delighted with the larger bird, and show it such fondness, that they think of and feed that alone, whilst their own young are neglected, and vanish from the nest.[1] Besides, the young cuckoo is always greedy, and demands as much nourishment as the little insect-eating birds can procure. It is a very long time before it attains its full size and plumage, and before it is capable of leaving the nest, and soaring to the top of a tree. And even long after it has flown, it requires to be fed continually; so that the whole summer passes away, while the affectionate foster-parents constantly attend upon their great child, and do not think of a second brood. It is on this account that a single young cuckoo causes the loss of so many other young birds."

"That is very convincing," said Goethe. "But is the young cuckoo, as soon as it has flown, fed also by other birds which have not hatched it? I fancy I have heard something of the kind."

"It is so. As soon as the young cuckoo has left its lower nest, and has taken its seat on the top of a tall oak, it utters a loud sound, which says that it is there. Then all the small birds in the neighbourhood that have heard it come up to greet it. The Gras-Mücke and the monk come; the yellow wagtail flies up; and even the wren, whose nature it is constantly to slip into low hedges and thick bushes, conquers its nature, and rises towards the beloved stranger to the top of the tall oak. But the pair that has reared it is more constant with food, whilst the rest only occasionally fly to it with a choice morsel."

"There also appears to be," said Goethe, "a great affection between the young cuckoo and the small insect-eating birds."

"The affection of the small insect-eating birds for the young cuckoo," said I, "is so great, that if any person approaches a nest, the little foster-parents do not know how to contain themselves for terror and anxiety. The monk especially expresses the deepest despair, and flutters on the ground almost as if it were in convulsions."

"This is wonderful enough," said Goethe; "but it can be readily conceived. Still it appears very problematical to me, that a pair of Gras-Mücken, for instance, on the point of hatching their own eggs, should allow the old cuckoo to approach their nest, and lay her egg in it."

"That is truly very enigmatical; but not quite inexplicable.

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[1] Eckermann seems not to have known that the young cuckoo throws them out.

All small insect-eating birds feed the cuckoo after it has flown, and it is fed even by those that did not hatch it; so there arises a sort of affinity between the two—they continue to know each other, and to consider each other members of one large family. Indeed, it may happen that the same cuckoo that was hatched and reared by a pair of Gras-Mücken last year may this year bring her egg to them."

"There is something in that," said Goethe, "little as one can comprehend it. But it still appears to me a wonder that the young cuckoo is fed by those birds that have neither hatched it nor reared it."

"That is, indeed, a wonder," said I; "but still it is not without analogy. I divine, in this direction, a great law pervading all nature.

"I once caught a young linnet, too big to be fed by man, but still too young to eat by itself. I took great trouble about it for half a day; but, as it would not eat anything at all, I placed it with an old linnet, a good singer, which I had kept for some time in a cage, and which hung outside my window. I thought, if the young bird sees how the old one eats, perhaps it will go to its food and imitate it. However, it did not do so, but opened its beak towards the old one, and fluttered its wings, uttering a beseeching cry; whereupon the old linnet at once took compassion on it, and, adopting it as a child, fed it as if it had been its own.

"Afterwards, someone brought me a grey Gras-Mücke, and three young ones which I put together in a large cage and which the old one fed. On the following day, someone brought me two young nightingales already fledged, which I put in with the Gras-Mücke, and which the mother bird likewise adopted and fed. Some days afterwards, I added a nest of young Müller-chen nearly fledged, and then a nest with five young Platt-Mönchen. The Gras-Mücke adopted all these and fed them, and tended them like a true mother. She had her beak always full of ants' eggs, and was now in one corner of the roomy cage, and now in the other, so that whenever a hungry throat opened, there she was. Still more: one of the young Gras-Mücken, which had grown up in the meantime, began to feed some of the smaller ones. This was, indeed, done in rather a playful, childish manner; but still with a decided inclination to imitate the excellent mother."

"There is certainly something divine in this," said Goethe "which gives me a pleasing sense of wonder. If it were a fact that this feeding by strangers was a universal law of nature, it would unravel many enigmas, and it could be said with certainty that God pities the deserted young ravens that call upon Him."

"It certainly appears to be a universal law," said I; "for I have observed this assistance in feeding and this pity for the forlorn, even in a wild state.

"Last summer, in the neighbourhood of Tiefurt, I took two young wrens—which had probably only just left their nest, for they sat on a twig with seven other young ones in a row, and the old bird was feeding them. I put the young birds in my silk pocket-handkerchief, and went towards Weimar, as far as the shooting-house; I then turned to the right towards the meadow, down along the Ilm, and passed the bathing-place, and then again to the left to the little wood. Here I thought I had a quiet spot to look once more at the wrens. But when I opened my handkerchief they both slipped out, and disappeared in the bushes and grass, so that I sought them in vain. Three days afterwards, I returned by chance to the same place, and hearing the note of a robin, guessed there was in the neighbourhood a nest; which, after looking about for some time, I really found. But how great was my astonishmen, when I saw in this nest, besides some young robins nearly fledged, my two young wrens, which had established themselves very comfortably and allowed themselves to be fed by the old robins!"

"That is one of the best ornithological stories I have ever heard," said Goethe. "I drink success to you, and good luck to your investigations. Whoever hears that, and does not believe in God, will not be aided by Moses and the prophets. That is what I call the omnipresence of the Deity, who has everywhere spread and implanted a portion of His endless love, and has intimated even in the brute, as a germ, that which only blossoms to perfection in noble man."

While we thus conversed on good and deep matters over our dinner in the open air, the sun had declined towards the summit of the western hills. We drove quickly through Jena; and after we had settled our account at the "Bear," and had paid a short visit to Frommann, we drove rapidly to Weimar.

(Sup.) Thursday, October 18, 1827.

Hegel—whom Goethe esteems very highly as a person, though he does not much relish some of the fruits produced by his philosophy—is here. In his honour, Goethe this evening gave a tea-party, at which was also present Zelter, who intended to depart to-night.

A great deal was said about Hamann; with respect to whom Hegel was chief spokesman, displaying a deep insight into this extraordinary mind, such as could only have arisen from a most earnest and scrupulous study of the subject.

The discourse then turned upon the nature of dialectics. "They are, in fact," said Hegel, "nothing more than the regulated, methodically-cultivated spirit of contradiction which is innate in all men, and which shows itself great as a talent in the distinction between the true and the false."

"Let us only hope," interposed Goethe, "that these intellectual arts and dexterities are not frequently misused, and employed to make the false true and the true false."

"That certainly happens," said Hegel; "but only with people who are mentally diseased."

"I therefore congratulate myself," said Goethe, "upon the study of nature, which preserves me from such a disease. For here we have to deal with the infinitely and eternally true, which throws off as incapable everyone who does not proceed purely and honestly with the treatment and observation of his subject. I am also certain that many a dialectic disease would find a wholesome remedy in the study of nature."

We were still discoursing in the most cheerful manner, when Zelter arose and went out, without saying a word. We knew that it grieved him to take leave of Goethe, and that he chose this delicate expedient for avoiding a painful moment.

1828

(Sup.) Tuesday, March 11, 1828.

For several weeks I have not been quite well. I sleep badly, and from night to morning have the most harassing dreams; in which I see myself in the most various states, carry on all sorts of conversation with known and unknown persons, get into disputes and quarrels—and all this in such a vivid manner that I am perfectly conscious of every particular next morning. But this dreamy life consumes the powers of my brain, so that I feel weak and unnerved in the daytime, and without wish or thought for intellectual activity.

I had frequently complained of my condition to Goethe, and he had repeatedly urged me to consult my physician. "Your malady," said he, "is certainly not very serious; it is probably nothing but a little stagnation, which a glass or two of mineral water or a little salts would remove. But do not let it linger; attack it at once."

Goethe may have been right, and I said to myself that he was right; but my indecision was such that I again allowed many restless nights and wretched days to pass, without making the least attempt at a cure.

As I did not seem to Goethe very gay and cheerful to-day after dinner, he lost patience, smiling at me ironically, and bantering me a little.

"You are a second Shandy," said he, "the father of that renowned Tristram, who was annoyed half his life by a creaking door, and who could not come to the resolution of removing the daily annoyance with a few drops of oil. But so it is with us all! The darkening and illuminating of man make his destiny. The dæmon ought to lead us every day in leading-strings, and tell us what we ought to do on every occasion. But the good spirit leaves us in the lurch, and we grope about in the dark.

"Napoleon was the man! Always illuminated, always clear and decided, and endowed at every hour with energy enough to carry out whatever he considered necessary. His life was the stride of a demigod, from battle to battle, and from victory to victory. It might well be said that he was in a state of continual illumination. On this account, his destiny was more brilliant than any the world had seen before him, or perhaps will ever see after him.

"Yes, yes, my good friend, that was a fellow we cannot imitate!"

Goethe paced up and down the room. I had placed myself at the table, which had been already cleared, but upon which there was left some wine with some biscuits and fruit. Goethe filled for me, and compelled me to partake of both. "You have, indeed," said he, "not condescended to be our guest at dinner to-day; but still a glass of this present from good friends ought to do you good."

I did not refuse these good things; and Goethe continued to walk up and down the room, murmuring to himself in an excited state of mind, and from time to time uttering unintelligible words.

What he had just said about Napoleon was in my mind, and I endeavoured to lead the conversation back to that subject. "Still it appears to me," I began, "that Napoleon was especially in that state of continued illumination when he was young, and his powers were yet on the increase—when, indeed, we see at his side divine protection and a constant fortune. In later years this illumination appears to have forsaken him, as well as his fortune and his good star."

"What would you have? I did not write my love songs, or my *Werther*, a second time. That divine illumination, whence everything proceeds, we shall always find in connection with youth and productiveness; as in the case of Napoleon, who was one of the most productive men that ever lived.

"Yes, yes, my good friend, one need not write poems and plays to be productive; there is also a productiveness of deeds, which in many cases stands an important degree higher. The physician himself must be productive, if he really intends to heal; if he is not so, he will succeed only now and then, as if by chance; but on the whole he will be only a bungler."

"You appear," added I, "to call productiveness that which is usually called genius."

"One lies very near the other," said Goethe. "For what is genius but that productive power by which arise deeds that can display themselves before God and nature, and are therefore permanent and produce results? All Mozart's works are of this kind; there lies in them a productive power that operates upon generation after generation and still is not wasted or consumed.

"It is the same with other great composers and artists. What an influence have Phidias and Raphael had upon succeeding centuries! And Dürer and Holbein also! The inventor of the forms and proportions of old German architecture, which led in course of time to Strasburg Minster and Cologne Cathedral, was also a genius; his thoughts operate even to the present hour. Luther was a genius of a very important kind; he has already gone on with influence for many a long day, and we cannot count the days when he will cease to be productive. Lessing would not allow himself the lofty title of a genius; but his permanent influence bears witness against him. On the other hand, we have in literature other names, and those of importance, the possessors of which while they lived were deemed great geniuses, but whose influence ended with their life and who were therefore less than they and others thought. As I said before, there is no genius without a productive power of permanent influence; furthermore, genius does not depend upon the business, the art, or the trade a man follows, but may be alike in all. Whether a man shows himself a genius in science, like Oken and Humboldt; or in war and statesmanship, like Frederick and Peter the Great and Napoleon; or whether he composes a song like Béranger—it all comes to the same thing; the only point is, whether the thought, the discovery, the deed, is living and can live on.

"It is not the *mass* of creations and deeds proceeding from a person, that indicates productivity. We have, in literature, poets considered very productive because volume after volume of their poems has appeared. But in my opinion these people ought to be called thoroughly unproductive; for what they have written is without life and durability. Goldsmith, on the contrary, has written so few poems that their number is not worth mentioning; nevertheless, I must pronounce him a thoroughly productive poet—indeed, even on that account; because the little he has written has an inherent life which can sustain itself."

Goethe continued to pace up and down. I was desirous of hearing something more on this weighty matter, and therefore endeavoured to arouse him once more.

"Does this productiveness of genius," said I, "lie merely in the mind of an important man, or does it also lie in the body?"

"The body," said Goethe, "has at least a mighty influence upon it. There was indeed a time when, in Germany, a genius was always thought of as short, weak, or hunchbacked; but commend me to a genius who has a well-proportioned body.

"When it was said of Napoleon that he was a man of granite, this applied particularly to his body. What was it he could not and did not venture? From the burning sands of the Syrian deserts to the snowy plains of Moscow, what incalculable marches, battles, and nightly bivouacs did he go through? And what fatigues and bodily privations was he forced to endure? Little sleep, little nourishment, and yet always in the highest mental activity. After the awful exertion and excitement of the eighteenth Brumaire, it was midnight, and he had not tasted anything during the whole day; and yet, without thinking of strengthening his body, he felt power enough in the depth of the night to draw up the well-known proclamation to the French people. When what he accomplished and endured is considered, it might be imagined that when he was in his fortieth year not a sound particle was left in him; but even at that age he still occupied the position of a perfect hero.

"But you are quite right; the real focus of his lustre belongs to his youth. And it is something to say that a man of obscure origin, at a time that set all capacities in motion, so distinguished himself as to become, in his seven-and-twentieth year, the idol of a nation of thirty millions! Yes, yes, my good friend, one must be young to do great things. And Napoleon is not the only one!"

"His brother Lucien," remarked I, "also did a great deal at an early age. We see him as President of the Five Hundred, and afterwards as Minister of the Interior, when scarce five-and-twenty."

"Why name Lucien?" interposed Goethe. "History presents to us hundreds of clever people who while still young have superintended with distinction the most important matters, both in the cabinet and in the field.

"If I were a prince," continued he, with animation, "I would never place in the highest offices people that have gradually risen by mere birth and seniority, who in their old age move on leisurely in their accustomed track; for in this way little talent is brought to light. I would have young men; but they must have capacities—clearness, energy, the best will, and the noblest character. Then there would be pleasure in governing and improving one's people. But where is there a prince who would like this, and who would be so well served?

"I have great hopes of the present Crown Prince of Prussia. From all that I hear and know of him, he is a very distinguished man; and this is necessary for the recognition and choice of qualified and clever people. For, say what we will, like can only be recognized by like; only a prince who himself possesses great abilities can properly acknowledge and value great abilities in his subjects and servants. 'Let the path be open to talent' was the well-known maxim of Napoleon; who really had a particular tact in the choice of his people, who knew how to place every outstanding ability where it seemed in its proper sphere, and who therefore during his lifetime was served in all his great undertakings as scarcely anyone was served before."

Goethe delighted me particularly this evening. The noblest part of his nature appeared alive in him, while the sound of his voice and the fire of his eyes were as powerful as if he were inflamed by a fresh blazing-up of his youth.

It was remarkable to me that he, who at so great an age himself superintended an important post, should speak so decidedly in favour of youth, and should desire the first offices in the state to be filled by men still young. I could not forbear mentioning some Germans of high standing who at an advanced age did not appear to want the necessary energy and youthful activity.

"Such men are natural geniuses," he said. "Their case is peculiar; they experience a renewed puberty, whilst other people are young but once.

"Every *Entelechy*[1] is a piece of eternity, and the few years during which it is bound to the earthly body do not make it old. If this *Entelechy* is of a trivial kind, it will exercise but little sway; the body will predominate, and when this grows old the *Entelechy* will not hold and restrain it. But if the *Entelechy* is of a powerful kind, as with all men of natural genius, then it will, with its animating penetration of the body, not only strengthen and ennoble the organization, but also endeavour with its spiritual superiority to confer the privilege of perpetual youth. Thence it comes that in men of superior endowments, even during their old age, we constantly perceive fresh epochs of singular productiveness; they seem constantly to grow young again for a time, and that is what I call a repeated puberty.

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[1] If for this Aristotelian word the reader substitutes the popular expression "soul," he will not go far wrong as far as this passage is concerned.—J. O.

An Aristotelian *Entelechy* is the condition by which a potentiality becomes an actuality.

Still—youth is youth; and, however powerful an *Entelechy* may prove, it will never become quite master of the corporeal; and it makes a wonderful difference whether it finds in the body an ally or an adversary.

"There was a time when I had to furnish a printed sheet every day, and I did it easily. I wrote my *Geschwister* (Brother and Sister) in three days; my *Clavigo*, as you know, in a week. Now it seems I can do nothing of the kind, and still I can by no means complain of want of productiveness even at my advanced age. But whereas in my youth I succeeded daily and under all circumstances, I now succeed only periodically and under favourable conditions. When, ten or twelve years ago, in the happy time after the war of independence, the poems of the *Divan* had me in their power, I often composed two or three in a day; and it was all the same to me whether I was in the open air, in the chariot, or in an inn. Now, I can only work at the second part of my *Faust* during the early part of the day, when I feel refreshed and revived by sleep and have not been perplexed by the trifles of daily life. And after all, what is it I achieve? In the most favourable circumstances, a page of writing: but generally only so much as could be written in the space of a hand-breadth; and often, when in an unproductive humour, still less."

"Are there, then, no means," said I, "to call forth a productive mood, or, if it is not powerful enough, of increasing it?"

"No productiveness of the highest kind," said Goethe, "no remarkable discovery, no great thought that bears fruit and has results, is in the power of anyone; such things are above earthly control. Man must consider them as an unexpected gift from above, as pure children of God which he must receive and venerate with joyful thanks. They are akin to the dæmon, which does with him what it pleases, and to which he unconsciously resigns himself whilst he believes he is acting from his own impulse. In such cases, man may often be considered an instrument in a higher government of the world—a vessel worthy to contain a divine influence. I say this when I consider how often a single thought has given a different form to whole centuries, and how individual men have imprinted a stamp upon their age which has remained uneffaced and operated beneficially for generations.

"However, there is a productiveness of another kind: one subject to earthly influences, one that man has more in his power—although here also he finds cause to bow before something divine. In this category I place all that appertains to the execution of a plan, all the links of a chain of thought, the ends of which already shine forth; I also place there all that constitutes the visible body of a work of art.

"Thus, Shakespeare was inspired with the first thought of his *Hamlet* when the spirit of the whole presented itself to his mind as an unexpected impression; and when he surveyed the several situations, characters, and conclusion, in an elevated mood, as a pure gift from above on which he had no immediate influence—although the possibility of such a conception certainly presupposed a mind like his. But the individual scenes, and the dialogue of the characters, he had completely in his power, so that he might produce them daily and hourly and work at them for weeks if he liked. And, indeed, we constantly see in all that he has achieved the same power of production; and in all his plays we never come to a passage of which it could be said 'This was not written in the proper humour, or with the most perfect faculty.' Whilst we read him, we receive the impression of a man thoroughly strong and healthy in both mind and body.

"Supposing, however, that the bodily constitution of a dramatic poet were not so strong and excellent, and that he were subject to frequent illness and weakness—the productiveness necessary for the daily construction of his scenes would very frequently cease, and would often fail him for days. If now, by alcohol, he tried to force his failing productiveness, the method would certainly answer; but it would be discoverable in all the scenes he had written under such an influence, to their great disadvantage. My counsel is, to force nothing, and rather to trifle and sleep away all unproductive days and hours, than on such days to compose something that will afterwards give no pleasure."

"That," said I, "is what I myself have very often experienced and felt. Still, it appears to me that a person might by natural means heighten his productive mood without exactly forcing it. I have often been unable to arrive at any right conclusion in complicated circumstances; but if I have drunk a few glasses of wine I have at once seen clearly what was to be done, and have come to a resolution on the spot. The adoption of a resolution is, after all, a species of productiveness; and, if a glass or two of wine will bring about this good effect, such means are surely not to be rejected altogether."

"I will not contradict you," said Goethe; "but what I said before is also correct, by which you see that truth may be compared to a diamond, the rays of which dart not to one side, but to many. Since you know my *Divan* so well, you know also that I myself have said:

When we have drunk
We know what 's right;

and therefore that I perfectly agree with you. Productive-making[1] powers of a very important kind certainly are contained in wine; still, all depends upon time and circumstance, and what is useful to one is prejudicial to another. Productive-making powers are also contained in sleep and repose; but they are also contained in movement. Such powers lie in the water, and particularly in the atmosphere. The fresh air of the open country is our proper element; it is as if the breath of God were there wafted immediately to men, and a divine power exerted its influence. Lord Byron, who daily passed several hours in the open air—now riding on horseback along the sea-shore; now sailing or rowing in a boat; now bathing in the sea, and exercising his physical powers in swimming—was one of the most productive men who ever lived."

Goethe had seated himself opposite to me. We again dwelt upon Lord Byron, and the many misfortunes that had embittered his later life—until at last a noble will, but an unhappy destiny, drove him into Greece, and entirely destroyed him.

"You will find," continued Goethe, "that in middle age a man frequently experiences a change; and that, while in his youth everything has favoured him, and has prospered with him, all is now completely reversed, and misfortunes and disasters are heaped one upon another.

"But do you know what I think about it? Man must be ruined again! Every extraordinary man has a certain mission to accomplish. If he has fulfilled it, he is no longer needed upon earth in the same form, and Providence uses him for something else. But as everything here below happens in a natural way, the dæmons keep tripping him up till he falls at last. Thus it was with Napoleon and many others. Mozart died in his six-and-thirtieth year. Raphael at the same age. Byron only a little older. But all these had perfectly fulfilled their missions; and it was time for them to depart, that other people might still have something to do in a world made to last a long while."

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[1] "Productivmachende." Probably he meant "production-stimulating."

It was now late; Goethe gave me his dear hand, and I departed.

(Sup.) Wednesday, March 12, 1828.

After I had quitted Goethe yesterday evening, the important conversation I had carried on with him remained in my mind. The discourse had also been upon the sea and sea air; and Goethe had expressed the opinion that all islanders and inhabitants of the seashore in temperate climates were far more productive, and possessed of more active force, than the people in the interior of large continents.

[Eckermann relates a dream he had: of being on the north coast of the Mediterranean amid Arcadian company which got left on a rock and had to swim ashore—a feat for which he was unwilling because of the comparative uncomeliness of his form; which was at length kindly appropriated in exchange by one of the comelier young men. Eckermann, feeling conscience-stricken for having left an unlovely body on his friend's hands, was astonished to see that the young man had, in the effort to swim ashore in a second-rate body, imparted to it a new youthfulness.]

"That is a very pretty dream," said Goethe, when, after dinner to-day, I related the principal incidents. "We see," continued he, "that the muses visit you even in sleep, and indeed with particular favour; for you must confess that it would be difficult for you to invent anything so peculiar and pretty in your waking moments."

"I can scarcely conceive how it happened to me; for I had felt so dejected all day that the contemplation of so fresh a life was far from my mind."

"Human nature possesses wonderful powers," said Goethe, "and has something good in readiness for us when we least hope for it. There have been times when I have fallen asleep in tears; but in my dreams the most charming forms have come to console and to cheer me, and I have risen the next morning fresh and joyful.

"There is something more or less wrong among us old Europeans; our relations are far too artificial and complicated, our nutriment and mode of life are unnatural, and our social intercourse is without proper love and good will. Everyone is polished and courteous; but nobody has the courage to be hearty and true; so that an honest man, with natural views and feelings, stands in a very bad position. Often we are tempted to wish that we had been born upon one of the South

Sea Islands, in a so-called savage state, so as to have thoroughly enjoyed human existence without adulteration.

"If in a depressed mood we reflect deeply upon the wretchedness of our age, it often occurs to us that the world is approaching the last day. And the evil accumulates from generation to generation! It is not enough that we have to suffer for the sins of our fathers; we hand down to posterity these inherited vices increased by our own."

"I have often thought so," answered I; "but if I see a regiment of German dragoons ride by me, and observe the beauty and power of these young people, I am again consoled, and say to myself that the durability of mankind is after all not in such a desperate plight."

"Our country people," said Goethe, "have certainly kept up their strength, and I hope will long be able not only to furnish good horsemen, but also to secure us from total decay and destruction. The rural population is a magazine, from which the forces of declining mankind are always recruited and refreshed. But just go into our great towns, and you will feel quite differently. Just take a turn by the side of a second *diable boiteux*, or a physician with a large practice; and he will whisper to you tales that will horrify you at the misery, and astonish you at the vice, with which human nature is visited and from which society suffers.

"But let us banish these hypochondriacal thoughts. How are you going on? What are you doing? What else have you seen to-day? Tell me, and inspire me with good thoughts."

"I have been reading Sterne, where Yorick is sauntering about the streets of Paris and remarks that every tenth man is a dwarf. I thought of that when you mentioned the vices of great towns. I also remember seeing, in Napoleon's time, among the French infantry, one battalion consisting entirely of Parisians, who were all such puny diminutive people that nobody could imagine what could be done with them in battle."

"The Scotch Highlanders under the Duke of Wellington," rejoined Goethe, "were doubtless heroes of another description."

"I saw them in Brussels a year before the battle of Waterloo. They were indeed fine men; all strong, fresh, and active, as if just from the hand of their Maker. They all carried their heads so freely and gallantly, and stepped so lightly along with their strong bare legs, that they seemed uncontaminated by either original sin or ancestral failing."

"There is something peculiar in this," said Goethe. "Whether it lies in the race, in the soil, in the free political constitution, or in the healthy tone of education—certainly, the English in general appear to have certain advantages over many others. Here in Weimar, we see only a few of them, and probably by no means the best; but what fine handsome people they are! And however young they come here, they feel no embarrassment in this foreign atmosphere; their deportment in society is as easy as if they were lords everywhere and the whole world belonged to them. This it is which pleases our women, and by which they make such havoc in the hearts of our young ladies. As a German father of a family, who is concerned for the tranquillity of his household, I often feel a slight shudder when my daughter-in-law announçes to me the expected arrival of some fresh young islander. I already see in my mind's eye the tears that will one day flow when he takes his departure. They are dangerous young people; but this very quality of being dangerous is their virtue."

"Still," said I, "I would not assert that the young Englishmen in Weimar are more clever, more intelligent, better informed, or more excellent at heart than other people."

"The secret does not lie in these things," returned Goethe. "Neither does it lie in birth and riches; it lies in the courage that they have to be what nature has made them for. There is nothing vitiated or spoilt about them, there is nothing half-way or crooked; but such as they are, they are thoroughly complete men. That they are also sometimes complete fools, I allow with all my heart; but that is still something, and has still always some weight in the scale of nature.

"The happiness of personal freedom, the consciousness of an English name and of the importance attached to it by other nations, is an advantage even to the children; for in their own family, as well as in school, they are treated with far more respect, and enjoy a far freer development, than is the case with us Germans.

"In our own dear Weimar, I need only look out at the window to discover how matters stand with us. Lately, when the snow was lying on the ground, and my neighbour's children were trying their little sledges in the street, the police were immediately at hand, and I saw the poor little things fly as quickly as they could. Now, when the spring sun tempts them from the houses, and they would like to play with their companions before the door, I see them always constrained, as if they were not safe and feared the approach of some despot of the police. Not a boy may crack a whip, or sing or shout; the police are immediately at hand to forbid it. This has the effect of taming youth prematurely, and of driving out all originality and all wildness, so that in the end nothing remains but the Philistine.

"You know that scarcely a day passes when I am not visited by some travelling foreigner. But if I were to say that I took great pleasure in the personal appearance especially of young learned Germans from a certain north-eastern quarter, I should lie.

"Short-sighted, pale, narrow-chested, young without youth; that is a picture of most of them. And if I enter into conversation with any of them, I immediately see that the things in which one of *us* takes pleasure seem to them vain and trivial, that they are entirely absorbed in the Idea, and that only the highest problems of speculation are fitted to interest them. Of sound senses or delight in the sensuous, there is no trace; all youthful feeling and all youthful pleasure are driven out of them, and that irrecoverably; for if a man is not young in his twentieth year, how can he be so in his fortieth?"

Goethe sighed and was silent.

I thought of the happy time in the last century, in which Goethe's youth fell; the summer air of Seesenheim passed before my soul, and I reminded him of the verses:

In the afternoon we sat,
Young people, in the cool.

"Ah," sighed Goethe, "those were indeed happy times. But we will drive them from our minds, that the dark foggy days of the present may not become quite insupportable."

"A second Redeemer," said I, "would be required to remove from us the seriousness, the discomfort, and the monstrous oppressiveness of the present state of things."

"If He came," answered Goethe, "He would be crucified a second time. Still, we need nothing so great. If we could only alter the Germans after the model of the English, if we could only have less philosophy and more power of action, less theory and more practice, we might obtain a good share of redemption without waiting for the personal majesty of a second Christ. Much may be done from below by the people by means of schools and domestic education; much from above by the rulers and those in immediate connection with them.

"Thus, for instance, I cannot approve the requirement, in the studies of future statesmen, of so much theoretically-learned knowledge, by which young people are ruined before their time, in both mind and body. When they enter into practical service, they possess indeed an immense stock of philosophy and learning; but in the narrow circle of their calling this cannot be practically applied and must therefore be forgotten as useless. On the other hand, what they most needed they have lost; they are deficient in mental and bodily energy, which is quite indispensable in practical life.

"And then, are not love and benevolence also needed in the life of a statesman—in the management of men? And how can anyone feel and exercise benevolence towards another, when he is ill at ease with himself?

"But all these people are in a dreadfully bad case. The third part of the learned men and statesmen, shackled to the desk, are ruined in body and consigned to the demon of hypochondria. Here there should be action from above, that future generations may at least be preserved from a like destruction.

"In the meantime," he continued, smiling, "let us remain in a state of hopeful expectation as to the condition of us Germans a century hence, and whether we shall then have advanced so far as to be no longer savants and philosophers, but men."

Sunday, June 15, 1828.

We had not been long at table before Herr Seidel, accompanied by the Tyrolese, was announced. The singers remained in the garden-room, so that we could see them perfectly through the open doors, and their song was heard to advantage from that distance. Herr Seidel sat down with us. These songs and the yodelling of the cheerful Tyrolese, with their peculiar burden, delighted us young people. Fräulein Ulrica and I were particularly pleased with the *Strauss*, and *Du, du, liegst mir im Herzen*, and asked for a copy of them. Goethe seemed by no means so much delighted as we.

"To know how cherries and strawberries taste," said he, "ask children and birds."

Between the songs, the Tyrolese played national dances on a sort of horizontal guitar accompanied by a clear-toned German flute.

Young Goethe was called out, but soon returned and dismissed the Tyrolese. He sat down with us again. We talked of *Oberon*, and the great concourse of people who had come together from all quarters to see that opera; so that even at noon there were no more tickets to be got. Young Goethe proposed we should leave the table.

"Dear father," said he, "our friends will wish to go somewhat earlier to the theatre this evening."

Goethe thought such haste very odd, as it was scarcely four o'clock; however, he made no opposition, and we dispersed through the apartments. Seidel came to me and some others, and said softly and with a troubled brow:

"You need anticipate no pleasure at the theatre; there will be no performance; the Grand Duke is dead; he died on his journey hither from Berlin."

A shock went through the company. Goethe came in; we went on as if nothing had happened, and talked of indifferent things. Goethe called me to the window, and talked about the Tyrolese and the theatre.

"You have my box to-day," said he, "and need not go till six; stay after the others, that we may have a little chat."

Young Goethe was trying to send the guests away, that he might break the news to his father before the return of the Chancellor, who had brought it to him. Goethe could not understand his son's conduct, and seemed annoyed.

"Will you not stay for coffee?" said he; "it is scarcely four o'clock."

The others all departed; and I, too, took my hat.

"What! are you going too?" said he, astonished.

"Yes," said young Goethe; "Eckermann has something to do before going to the theatre." "Yes," said I, "I have something to do." "Go along then," said Goethe, shaking his head with a suspicious air; "still, I do not understand you."

We went with Fräulein Ulrica into the upper rooms, while young Goethe remained below, and broke the sad tidings to his father.

I saw Goethe late in the evening. Before I entered his chamber, I heard him sighing and talking aloud to himself: he seemed to feel that an irreparable rent had been torn in his existence. He refused all consolation.

"I thought," said he, "that I should depart before him; but God disposes as He thinks best; and all that we poor mortals have to do is to endure and keep ourselves upright as well and as long as we can."

The Dowager Grand Duchess received the melancholy news at her summer residence of Wilhelmsthal, the younger members of the family received it in Russia. Goethe went soon to Dornburg, to withdraw himself from daily saddening impressions and to restore himself by fresh activity in a new scene. By important literary incitements on the part of the French, he had been once more impelled to his theory of plants; and this rural abode, where at every step into the pure air he was surrounded by the most luxurious vegetation, twining vines and sprouting flowers, was very favourable to such studies.

I sometimes visited him there, in company with his daughter-in-law and grandchildren. He seemed very happy, and repeatedly expressed his delight at the beautiful situation of the castle and gardens.

And indeed there was, from windows at such a height, an enchanting prospect. Beneath was the variegated valley, with the Saale meandering through the meadows. On the opposite side, toward the east, were woody hills, in the daytime passing showers losing themselves in the distance, and at night the eastern starry host and the rising sun.

"I enjoy here," said Goethe, "both good days and good nights. Often before dawn I am awake, and lie down by the open window to enjoy the splendour of the three planets at present visible together, and to refresh myself with the increasing brilliance of the morning-red. I then pass almost the whole day in the open air, and hold spiritual communion with the tendrils of the vine, which say good things to me and of which I could tell you wonders. I also write poems again —which are not bad—and, if it were permitted, I should like always to remain here."

Thursday, September 11, 1828.

At two o'clock to-day, in the very finest weather, Goethe returned from Dornburg. He looked very well, and was quite browned by the sun. We soon sat down to dinner in the chamber next the garden, the doors of which stood open. He told us of many visits and presents he had received, and indulged in light jests. Closer observation, however, revealed a certain embarrassment, such as is felt by a person returning to a former situation that is conditioned by manifold relations, views, and requirements.

During the first course, a message came from the Dowager

Grand Duchess, expressing her pleasure at Goethe's return and announcing that she would visit him on the following Tuesday.

Since the death of the Grand Duke, Goethe had seen no member of the reigning family. He had indeed corresponded constantly with the Dowager Grand Duchess, so that they had sufficiently expressed their feelings upon their common loss. Neither had Goethe yet seen the young Duke and Duchess, nor paid his homage to them as new rulers of the land. All this he had now to undergo; and, even though it could not disturb him as an accomplished man of the world, it was an impediment to his talent, which always loved to move in its own way. Visits, too, threatened him from all parts. The meeting at Berlin of celebrated scientists had set in motion many important personages; some of whom, passing through Weimar, had announced themselves, and were soon expected. Whole weeks of disturbance, which would take the inner self out of its usual track, and other annoyances connected with visits otherwise so valuable—all this was anticipated like a coming spectre by Goethe. What made all these coming evils still worse was that, the fifth section of his works, to contain the *Wanderjahre*, having been promised for the press at Christmas, Goethe had begun an entire remodelling of this novel, which originally appeared in one volume—combining so much new matter with the old that in the new edition it would occupy three volumes.

Much is done, but there is also much to do. The manuscript has everywhere gaps of white paper, yet to be filled up.

Last spring Goethe gave me this manuscript to look over. We then both by voice and in writing discussed the subject at great length. I advised him to devote the whole summer to the completion, and to lay aside all other work. He was convinced of the necessity, and had resolved to do so; but the death of the Grand Duke had caused a gap in his existence; the tranquillity and cheerfulness necessary to such a composition were not now to be thought of, and he needed all his strength merely to sustain the blow and to revive from it. Now, when, with the commencement of autumn, returning from Dornburg, he again paced the rooms of his Weimar residence, the thought of completing his *Wanderjahre*, for which he had now only the space of a few months, came vividly before his mind. So Goethe was ill at ease within himself, although he jested lightly at dinner. I have another reason for mentioning these circumstances, they are connected with an observation of Goethe's, of which I will now speak.

Professor Abeken of Osnaburg had sent me, shortly before the 28th of August, an enclosure, requesting me to give it to Goethe on his birthday, and saying it was a memorial relating to Schiller. When Goethe was speaking to-day at dinner of the presents sent to him at Dornburg in honour of his birthday, I asked him what Abeken's packet contained.

"It was a remarkable present," said Goethe, "which gave me great pleasure. An amiable lady with whom Schiller took tea conceived the happy idea of writing down all he said. She comprehended it well, and related it with accuracy; and, after so long a time, it still reads well: transplanting you immediately into a situation now past—with a thousand others as interesting, while the living spirit of this one only has been happily caught and fixed upon paper.

"Schiller appears here in as perfect possession of his sublime nature at the tea-table as he would have been in a council of state. Nothing constrains him, nothing narrows him, nothing draws downward the flight of his thoughts; the great views that lie within him are ever expressed freely and fearlessly. He was a true man, such as one ought to be. We others always feel ourselves subject to conditions. The persons, the objects that surround us, have their influence. The tea-spoon constrains us, if it is of gold, when it should be of silver; and so, paralysed by a thousand considerations, we fail in expressing freely whatever may be great in our nature. We are the slaves of environment, and appear little or important according as this contracts or gives us room to expand."

Wednesday, October 1, 1828.

Herr Hönninghausen of Crefeld, head of a great mercantile house, and also an amateur of natural science, especially mineralogy—a man possessed of varied information, through extensive travels and studies—dined with Goethe to-day. He had returned from the meeting of scientists at Berlin; and a great deal was said about things scientific, especially mineralogical.

There was also some talk about the Vulcanists, and the way in which men arrive at views and hypotheses about Nature. On this occasion, several great scientists were mentioned, including Aristotle, concerning whom Goethe spoke thus:

"Aristotle observed Nature better than any modern, but he was too hasty with his opinions. We must go slowly and gently to work with Nature, if we would get anything out of her.

"If, on investigating natural objects, I formed an opinion, I did not expect Nature to concede the point at once; but I pursued her with observations and experiments, and was satisfied if she were kind enough to confirm my opinion when occasion offered. If she did not do this, she at any rate brought me to some other view, which I followed out and which I perhaps found her more willing to confirm."

Friday, October 3, 1828.

To-day, at dinner, I talked with Goethe about Fouqué's *Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg*,[1] which I had read in compliance with his wish. We agreed that this poet had spent his life in old-German studies, without drawing from them any real culture in the end.

"From these old-German gloomy times," said Goethe, "we can obtain as little as from the Serbian songs and similar barbaric popular poetry. We can read it and be interested for a while, but merely to cast it aside and to let it lie behind us. Generally speaking, a man is sufficiently saddened by his own passions and destiny, and need not make himself more so by the darkness of a barbaric past. He needs illuminating and cheering influences, and should turn to those eras in art and literature when remarkable men obtained perfect culture so that they were satisfied with themselves and able to impart the blessing to others.

"But if you would have a good opinion of Fouqué, read his *Undine*, which is charming. The subject is indeed very good; the writer has scarcely done with it all that was possible."

"I have been unfortunate in my acquaintance with the most modern German literature," said I. "I came to the poems of Egon Ebert from Voltaire, whose acquaintance I had just made through those little poems addressed to individuals, which certainly belong to the best he ever wrote. And now, I have fared no better with Fouqué. While deeply engaged in Walter Scott's *Fair Maid of Perth*, the first work of this great writer which I had ever read, I am induced to put it aside, and to give myself up to the *Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg*."

"Against these great foreigners," said Goethe, "the modern Germans certainly cannot keep their ground; but it is desirable you should by degrees make yourself acquainted with all writers, foreign and domestic, that you may see how that higher world-culture which the poet needs is to be obtained."

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[1] The *War of the Singers of the Wartburg* was a famous poetical contest in the days of the old Minnesängers.—J. O.

Frau von Goethe came in and sat down to the table with us.

"But," continued Goethe, with animation, "Walter Scott's *Fair Maid of Perth* is excellent, is it not? There is finish! there is a hand! What a firm foundation for the whole, and in particulars not a touch which does not lead to the catastrophe! Then, what details of dialogue and description, both of which are excellent.

"His scenes and situations are like pictures by Teniers; in the arrangement they show the summit of art, the individual figures have a speaking truth, and the execution is extended with artistic love to the minutest details, so that not a stroke is lost. How far have you read?"

"I have come," said I, "to the passage where Henry Smith carries the pretty minstrel girl home through the streets, and round about lanes; and where, to his great vexation, Proudfoot and Dwining meet him."

"Ah," said Goethe, "that is excellent; that the obstinate honest blacksmith should be brought at last to take with him not only the suspicious maiden, but even the little dog, is one of the finest things to be found in any novel. It shows a knowledge of human nature, to which the deepest mysteries are revealed."

"It was also," said I, "an admirable notion to make the heroine's father a glover, who, by his trade in skins, must have been long in communication with the Highlanders."

"Yes," said Goethe, "that is a touch of the highest order. From this spring the book's best settings and situations; which thus obtain a real basis, an air of convincing truth. You find everywhere in Walter Scott a remarkable security and thoroughness in his delineation; which proceeds from his comprehensive knowledge of the real world, obtained by lifelong studies and observations and a daily discussion of the most important settings. Then come his great talent and his comprehensive nature. You remember the English critic who compares the poets to the voices of male singers, of which some can command only a few fine tones—while others have the whole compass, from the highest to the lowest, completely in their power. Walter Scott is one of this last sort. In the *Fair Maid of Perth* you will not find a single weak passage to make you feel as if his knowledge and talent were insufficient. He is equal to his subject in every direction: the king, the royal brother, the prince, the head of the clergy, the nobles, the magistracy, the citizens and mechanics, the Highlanders—are all drawn with the same sure hand, and hit off with equal truth."

"The English," said Frau von Goethe, "particularly like the character of Henry Smith, and Walter Scott seems to have made him the hero of the book: however, he is not my favourite; I like the prince."

"The prince," said I, "is indeed amiable enough with all his wildness, and is as well drawn as any of the rest."

"The passage," said Goethe, "where, sitting on horseback, he makes the pretty minstrel girl step upon his foot, that he may raise her up for a kiss, is in the boldest English style. But you ladies are wrong always to take sides. Usually, you read a book to find nutrition for the heart; to find a hero whom you could love. This is not the way to read; the great point is, not whether this or that character pleases, but whether the whole book pleases."

"We women were made so, dear father," said she, affectionately leaning over the table to press his hand.

"Well, we must let you have your own way in your amiability," replied Goethe.

The last number of the *Globe* lay by him, and he took it up. I talked meanwhile with Frau von Goethe, about some young Englishmen whose acquaintance I had made at the theatre.

"What men these writers in the *Globe* are!" resumed Goethe, with animation. "How they become greater and more remarkable every day, and how much imbued with one spirit! Such a paper would be utterly impossible in Germany. We are mere individuals; harmony and concert are not to be thought of: each has the opinions of his province, his city, and his own idiosyncrasy; it will be long before we have attained a universal culture."

Tuesday, October 7, 1828.

There was the most lively party at dinner to-day. Besides the Weimar friends, there were some scientists returned from Berlin; among whom Herr von Martius, from Munich, who sat next Goethe, was known to me. Goethe was good-humoured and communicative. The theatre was talked about, and much was said of the opera last given—Rossini's *Moses*. They found fault with the subject, and both praised and found fault with the music.

Goethe said, "I do not understand how you can separate the subject from the music and enjoy each by itself. You say the subject is not a good one; but you can set that aside and enjoy the excellent music. I really admire this arrangement in your natures, by which your ears are able to listen to pleasant sounds, while the most powerful sense—vision—is tormented by the absurdest objects. And that this *Moses* is absurd, you will not deny. When the curtain rises you see the people standing at prayer. This is very wrong. It is written, 'When thou prayest, go into thy closet, and shut the door.'[1] But there ought to be no praying on the stage.

"I would have made a wholly different *Moses*, and have begun the piece quite otherwise. I would have first shown you how the children of Israel suffered from the tyranny of the Egyptian task-masters, in order to render more conspicuous the merit of Moses in freeing them."

Goethe then cheerfully went through the whole opera step by step, through all the scenes and acts, with a historical feeling for the subject, to the delighted astonishment of the whole company. It passed too quickly for me to seize it; but I remember the dance of the Egyptians, which Goethe introduced to express their joy at the return of light, after the darkness had been overcome.

The conversation turned from Moses to the deluge, and took a scientific turn.

"It is said," observed Herr von Martius, "they have found on Ararat a petrified piece of Noah's ark, and I shall be surprised if they do not also find petrified skulls of the first men."

This remark led to others of a similar kind, and the conversation turned upon the various races of men—how as black, brown, yellow, and white, they inhabit the different countries of the earth. Finally arose the question whether we ought to assume that all men are descended from the single pair, Adam and Eve.

Von Martius was for the biblical account, which he sought to confirm by the maxim that Nature goes to work as economically as possible in her productions.

"I cannot agree," said Goethe. "Nature is always lavish, even prodigal; and it would show more acquaintance with her to believe she has, instead of one paltry pair, produced men by dozens or hundreds.

"When the earth had arrived at a certain point of maturity, when the water had ebbed away and the dry land was verdant enough, came the epoch for the creation of man; and men arose, through the omnipotence of God, wherever the ground permitted—perhaps on the heights first.

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[1] If Goethe said this, he had his Bible-dates sadly mixed up.

"To believe that this happened is reasonable; but to attempt to decide *how* it happened is useless trouble, which we will leave to those who like to busy themselves with insoluble problems and have nothing better to do."

"Even," said Herr von Martius, archly, "if I could, as a naturalist, willingly yield to your excellency's opinion, I should as a good Christian find some difficulty in adopting a view that cannot well be reconciled with the account given us in the Bible."

"Holy writ," replied Goethe, "certainly speaks only of one pair of human beings, whom God made on the sixth day. But the gifted men who wrote down the Word of God, as recorded in the Bible, had first in view their own chosen people; and, as far as that people is concerned, we will not dispute the honour of a descent from Adam and Eve. But we, as well as the Negroes and Laplanders, and slender men, who are handsomer than any of us, had certainly different ancestors; and this worthy company must confess that we at present differ in a variety of particulars from the genuine descendants of Adam, and that they — especially where money is concerned — are superior to us all."

We laughed. Goethe, excited by von Martius to argument, said many things which, under the appearance of jesting, had a deeper meaning at bottom.

After dinner, the Prussian minister, Herr von Jordan, was announced, and we went into the next room.

Wednesday, October 8, 1828.

Tieck, returning from a journey to the Rhine, with his wife, his daughters, and Countess Finkenstein, was to dine with Goethe to-day. I met them in the ante-room.

Professor Göttling came in, fresh from his Italian tour. I was extremely glad to see him again, and drew him to a window that he might tell me what he had seen.

[The burden of Göttling was that he had to leave Rome because his money was spent.]

Goethe came in, and greeted his guests. He talked on various subjects with Tieck and his family, and then offered the Countess his arm to take her to the dining-room.

After dinner, the Princes von Oldenburg were announced. We then went up to Frau von Goethe's apartment, where Fräulein Agnes Tieck seated herself at the piano, and gave us the song *Im Felde schleich' ich still und wild*, with a fine alto voice, and thoroughly in the spirit of the situation.

Thursday, October 9, 1828.

I dined to-day with Goethe and Frau von Goethe alone; and, as often happens, a conversation begun on one day was continued on another. Rossini's *Moses* was again spoken of, and we recalled Goethe's lively invention the day before yesterday.

"What I said, in the merriment and good-humour of the moment, about *Moses*," said he, "I cannot recall; for such things are done unconsciously. But of this I am certain: I cannot enjoy an opera unless the story is as perfect as the music, so that the two may keep pace. If you ask what opera I consider good, I would name the *Wasserträger* (Water-Carrier); for here the subject is so perfect that, if given as a mere drama without music, it could be seen with pleasure. Composers either do not understand the importance of a good foundation, or have not intelligent poets to assist them with good stories. If *Der Freischütz* had not been so good a subject, the mere music would hardly have drawn such crowds; so Herr Kind should have some share in the honour."

We spoke of Professor Göttling and his travels in Italy.

"I cannot blame the good man," said Goethe, "for speaking of Italy with such enthusiasm; I well know what I experienced myself. Indeed, I may say that only in Rome have I felt what it really is to be a man. To this elevation, to this happiness of feeling, I have never since arisen; indeed, compared with my situation at Rome, I have never since felt real gladness.

"But," he continued, "we will not give ourselves up to melancholy thoughts. How do you get on with your *Fair Maid of Perth*?"

"I read slowly," said I. "However, I am now as far as the scene where Proudfoot, when in Henry Smith's armour he imitates his walk and whistle, is slain, and on the following morning is found in the streets of Perth by the citizens; who, taking him for Smith, raise a great alarm."

"Aye," said Goethe, "that scene is remarkable; it is one of the best."

"I have been struck," said I, "with Walter Scott's great talent for disentangling confused situations; so that the whole separates itself into masses and quiet pictures, which leave on our minds an impression as if, like omniscient beings, we had looked down and seen events occurring at the same time in various places."

"All round," said Goethe, "he shows great understanding of art; so that people like us, who always look to see how things are done, find a double interest in his works.

"I will not anticipate, but you will find in the third volume an admirable contrivance. You have already seen how the prince in council makes the wise proposal to let the rebel Highlanders destroy one another in combat, and how Palm Sunday is appointed for the hostile clans to come down to Perth and to fight for life or death—thirty against thirty. You will see with admiration how Scott manages to make one man fail on one side on the decisive day, and with what art he contrives to bring his hero Smith from a distance into the vacant place among the combatants. This is admirably done; and you will be delighted when you come to it.

"But, when you have finished the *Fair Maid of Perth*, you must at once read *Waverley*; which is indeed from quite a different point of view, but which may without hesitation be set beside the best works that have ever been written in this world. We see that it is the same man who wrote the *Fair Maid of Perth*, but that he had yet to gain the favour of the public, and therefore collected his forces so that he might not give a touch that is short of excellence. The *Fair Maid of Perth*, on the other hand, is from a freer pen; the author is now sure of his public, and proceeds more at liberty. After reading *Waverley*, you will understand why Walter Scott still designates himself the author of that work; for there he showed what he could do; and he has never since written anything to surpass, or even equal, that first-published novel."

Thursday evening, October 9, 1828.

In honour of Tieck, a very pleasant tea-party was given this evening in the apartments of Frau von Goethe. I made the acquaintance of Count and Countess Medem. The latter told me that she had seen Goethe to-day and had been highly delighted. The Count was especially interested in *Faust* and its continuation, and animatedly conversed with me about it.

We had hoped that Tieck would read something aloud, and he did. The party retired into a more remote room, and after all had comfortably seated themselves in a wide circle on chairs and sofas, he read *Clavigo*.

I had often read and felt this drama; but now it appeared to me quite new. It seemed as if I heard it from the stage, only better; every character and situation was more perfectly felt: as in a theatrical representation in which each part is well performed.

It would be hard to say what parts Tieck read best—those in which the powers and passions of the male characters are developed, or the quiet clear scenes addressed to the understanding, or the moments of tortured love. For giving expression to passages of this last sort, he had especial qualifications. The scene between Marie and Clavigo is still ringing in my ears: the oppressed bosom; the faltering and trembling of the voice; the broken half-stifled words and sounds; the panting and sighing of a hot breath, accompanied with tears—all is still present with me, and will never be forgotten. Everyone was absorbed and wholly carried away. The lights burned dim; nobody thought of that or ventured to snuff them, for fear of the slightest interruption. Tears constantly dropping from the eyes of the ladies showed the deep effect of the piece, and were the most hearty tribute that could be paid to the reader or the poet.

Tieck had finished, and rose, wiping the perspiration from his forehead; but the hearers seemed still fettered to their chairs. Each man appeared too deeply engaged with what had just been passing through his soul, to have ready the suitable words of gratitude for him who had produced so wonderful an effect upon us all. Gradually, however, we recovered ourselves. The company arose, and talked cheerfully. Then we partook of a supper that stood ready on little tables in the adjoining rooms.

Goethe himself was not present this evening; but his spirit and a remembrance of him were living among us all. He sent an apology to Tieck; and to his daughters, Agnes and Dorothea, two handkerchief-pins with his own picture and red ribbons, which Frau von Goethe gave them and fastened to their dresses like little orders.

Friday, October 10, 1828.

From Mr. William Frazer of London, editor of the *Foreign Review,* I received this morning two copies of the third number of that periodical. I gave one to Goethe at dinner.

I found again a pleasant dinner-party, invited in honour of Tieck and the Countess; who, at the urgent request of Goethe and their other friends, had remained another day, the rest of the family having set off in the morning for Dresden.

A special subject of conversation was English literature, and particularly Walter Scott; on which occasion Tieck said *he* brought to Germany the first copy of *Waverley*, ten years ago.

Saturday, October 11, 1828.

The above-mentioned number of the *Foreign Review* contained, with a variety of other important and interesting articles, a very fine essay by Carlyle, upon Goethe, which I studied this morning.

I went to Goethe a little earlier to dinner, that I might have an opportunity of talking this over with him before the arrival of the other guests. I found him, as I wished, still alone, expecting the company. He wore his black coat and star, with which I so much like to see him. He appeared to-day in quite youthful spirits, and told me he likewise had been looking at Carlyle's article this morning, so that we were in a position to exchange commendations of these foreign attempts.

"It is pleasant to see," said Goethe, "how the earlier pedantry of the Scotch has changed into earnestness and profundity. When I recollect how the *Edinburgh* reviewers treated my works not many years since, and when I now consider Carlyle's merits with respect to German literature, I am astonished at the important step for the better."

"In Carlyle," said I, "I venerate most the mind and character at the foundation of his tendencies. The chief point with him is the culture of his own nation; and, in the literary productions of other countries which he wishes to make known to his contemporaries, he pays less attention to the arts of talent, than to the moral elevation that can be attained through such works."

"Yes," said Goethe, "the temper in which he works is always admirable. What an earnest man he is! and how he has studied us Germans! He is almost more at home in our literature than we are. At any rate, we cannot vie with him in our researches in English literature."

"The article," said I, "is written with a fire and impressiveness which show that there are many prejudices and contradictions to contend with in England. *Wilhelm Meister* especially seems to have been placed in an unfavourable light by malevolent critics and bad translators. Carlyle, on the contrary, opposes to the stupid objection that no virtuous lady could read *Wilhelm Meister*, the example of the late Queen of Prussia, who made herself familiar with the book, and was rightly esteemed one of the first women of her time."

There now came in some of the guests, whom Goethe received. He then turned to me again.

"Carlyle has, indeed," said I, "studied *Meister*; and being so thoroughly penetrated with its value, he would like to see it universally circulated."

Goethe drew me to a window to answer me.

"My dear young friend," said he, "I will confide to you something that may help you on a great deal. My works cannot be popular. He who thinks and strives to make them so is in error. They are written, not for the multitude, but only for individuals who desire something congenial, whose aims are like my own."

He wished to say more; but a young lady who came up interrupted him and drew him into conversation. I turned to the others, and soon afterwards we sat down to table.

I could pay no attention to the conversation that was going on; Goethe's words entirely occupied my mind.

[Eckermann here puts in words a longish reverie he fell into at this point, concerning the intellectual aristocraticalness necessary to qualify anybody to be an admirer of Goethe.]

Meanwhile, all around me were jesting and talking, and partaking of the good fare. I spoke now and then a word, but without exactly knowing what I said. A lady put a question to me; to which, it seems, I did not render a very appropriate answer: they all laughed at me.

"Leave Eckermann alone," said Goethe. "He is always absent, except when he is at the theatre."

Biscuits and some very fine grapes were brought for dessert. The latter had been sent from a distance, and Goethe would not say whence they came. He divided them, and handed me a very ripe branch across the table.

I highly enjoyed the grapes from Goethe's hand, and was now quite near him in both body and soul.

They talked of the theatre, and of Wolff's great merits, and of what had been done by that excellent artist.

"I know very well," said Goethe, "that our earlier actors learned much from me, but I can properly call none but Wolff my pupil. I will give you an instance, which I am very fond of repeating; to show how thoroughly he was penetrated with my principles, and how fully he acted in my spirit. I was once very angry with Wolff for various reasons. He played one evening, and I was sitting in my box. 'Now,' thought I, 'you can keep a sharp look out upon him; for there is not to-day a spark of affection within you which can speak out for him and excuse him.' Wolff acted, and I kept my eye fixed upon him. And how he did act! How safe—how firm he was! It was impossible to find even the shadow of an offence against the rules I had implanted, and I saw that a reconciliation with him was inevitable."

Monday, October 20, 1828.

Oberbergrath[1] Nœggerath of Bonn, on his return from the meeting of scientists at Berlin, was a very welcome guest to-day at Goethe's table. He gave us sound information about the mineralogy of the neighbourhood of Bonn.

After dinner we went into the room where there is the colossal bust of Juno. Goethe showed the guests a long slip of paper, with outlines of the frieze of the temple at Phigalia. While we were looking at these, somebody remarked that the Greeks, in representing animals, adhered less to nature than to certain conventional rules; and there was an attempt to prove, that in representations of this kind they are inferior to nature and that their rams, oxen, and horses, as they appear in bas-relief, are often very stiff, shapeless, and imperfect creatures.

"I will not dispute that point," said Goethe; "but before all, we must distinguish the time and the artist from which such works proceed. Plenty of masterpieces have been found, in which the Greek artists, in representing animals, have not only equalled, but far surpassed nature. Even the English, who understand horses better than any nation in the world, are compelled to acknowledge that there exist two antique heads of horses more perfect in their form than those of any race now on earth.

"These heads are from the best Greek period; and our astonishment at such works ought not to lead us to infer that the artists copied from a more perfect nature than we have now. Rather, they themselves had become of some value in the progress of art, so that they confronted nature with their own personal greatness."

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[1] Literally "Upper-Mine-Councillor"—a superior officer in a mining office.—J. O.

While all this was said, I stood looking at an engraving with a lady at one of the tables, and could only lend half an ear to Goethe's words; but so much the deeper did they sink into my mind.

After the company had gradually departed, and I was alone with Goethe, who stood by the stove, I approached him.

"Your excellency," said I, "made an excellent remark a little while ago, when you said that the Greeks confronted nature with their own greatness, and I think that we cannot be too deeply penetrated with this maxim."

"Yes," said Goethe, "all depends on this: one must *be* something in order to *do* something. Dante seems to us great; but he had the culture of centuries behind him. The house of Rothschild is rich; but it has taken more than one generation to accumulate such treasures. These things lie deeper than is thought.

"Our worthy artists who imitate the old German school know nothing of this; they imitate nature with their own weakness and artistic incapacity, and fancy they are doing something. They stand *below* nature. But whoever will produce anything great must have so improved his culture that, like the Greeks, he can elevate the trivial actualities of nature to the level of his own mind, and really carry out what remains a mere intention in natural phenomena—from either internal weakness or external obstacles."

Wednesday, October 22, 1828.

To-day at dinner we talked about ladies. "Women," said Goethe, "are silver dishes into which we put golden apples. My idea of women is not abstracted from the phenomena of actual life; but has been born with me, or arisen in me, God knows how. The female characters I have drawn have therefore all turned out well; they are all better than could be found in reality."

(Sup.) Thursday, October 23, 1828.

Goethe spoke to-day with great respect of a little paper of the Chancellor's on the Grand Duke Charles Augustus; which reviews, in short compass, the active life of this remarkable prince.

"He has been very happy with this little work," said Goethe; "the materials are carefully gathered; all is animated by the heartiest love, while at the same time the style is so close that one act follows immediately upon another, and we almost feel a mental giddiness in the contemplation of such fulness of life. The Chancellor has sent his work to Berlin, and received some time ago a letter from Alexander von Humboldt, which I could not read without deep emotion. Humboldt was on the most intimate terms with the Grand Duke during a long life—which certainly is not to be wondered at, since the highly endowed nature of the Prince was always athirst for fresh knowledge; and Humboldt, with his universality, was just the man to be always ready with the best answer to every question.

"Now, it is singular that the Grand Duke passed his very last days at Berlin in almost constant intercourse with Humboldt, and that he was at last able to obtain from his friend the solution of many important problems that lay near his heart. Further, for one of the greatest princes Germany ever possessed to have had such a man as Humboldt as witness of his last days and hours was most fortunate. I have made a copy of the letter, and will show you some passages."

Goethe went to his desk, whence he took the letter, and then reseated himself at the table. He read for some time in silence. I saw tears in his eyes. "Read it for yourself," said he, whilst he handed it to me. He rose and walked up and down the room whilst I read:

[Humboldt's letter praised the cheerfulness of the Grand Duke's last days. Within twenty-four hours of death he was asking about the granite of the shores of the Baltic (just brought from Sweden), the possibility of a comet tail's dimming our atmosphere, the cause of the severity of winters on eastern coasts, and whether hot springs (such as Töplitz—whither he was going) were just like water artificially heated. At Potsdam, Humboldt sat many hours beside his couch while he alternately drank, slept, and wrote to his wife—at intervals propounding difficult questions in physics, astronomy, meteorology, and geognosy; upon the first appearance of organized forms; and upon the earth's internal heat.]

"He slept at intervals during his discourse and mine; was often restless; and then said, mildly and kindly excusing his apparent inattention, 'You see, Humboldt, it is all over with me!'

"Suddenly, he began to talk desultorily upon religious matters. He regretted the increase of pietism, and the connection of this species of fanaticism with a tendency towards political absolutism and a suppression of all free mental action. 'Then,' he exclaimed, 'there are false-hearted fellows who think that by means of pietism they can make themselves agreeable to princes and obtain places and ribbons. They have smuggled themselves in with a poetical predilecrion for the Middle Ages.'

"His anger soon abated, and he said that he now found much consolation in the Christian religion. 'It is a humane doctrine,' said he, 'but has been distorted from the beginning. The first Christians were the free-thinkers among the ultras.'"

I expressed to Goethe my delight at this noble letter. "You see," said Goethe, "what an extraordinary man he was. But how good it is of Humboldt to have taken up these last few traits, in which the whole nature of this eminent prince is reflected. Yes, such he was!—I can say it better than anyone, for nobody knew him so thoroughly as I did. But is it not lamentable that there is no distinction, and that such a man must depart from us so early! Had he stayed with us only a poor century more, how, in his high position, he could have advanced his age! But mark this. The world will not attain its goal so speedily as we expect and desire. There are always retarding dæmons, who start in opposition at every point; so that, although the whole progresses, it is but slowly. Only live on, and you will find that I am right."

"The development of mankind," said I, "appears to be laid out as a work for thousands of years."

"Perhaps millions," said Goethe—"who knows? But let mankind last as long as it may, it will never lack obstacles to give it trouble, and never lack the pressure of necessity to develop its powers.

"Men will become more clever and more acute; but not better, happier, and stronger in action—or at least only at epochs. I foresee the time when God will have no more joy in them, but will break up everything for a renewed creation. I am certain that everything is planned to this end, and that the time and hour in the distant future for the occurrence of this renovating epoch are already fixed. But a long time will elapse first, and we may still for thousands and thousands of years amuse ourselves on this dear old surface."

Goethe was in a particularly good and elevated mood. He ordered a bottle of wine, and filled for himself and me. Our conversation again turned upon the Grand Duke Charles Augustus.

"You see," said Goethe, "how his extraordinary mind embraced all nature. Physics, astronomy, geognosy, meteorology, vegetable and animal formations of the primitive world

—he had a mind for all. He was eighteen when I came to Weimar; but even then the buds showed what the tree would one day become. He soon attached himself to me, and took a deep interest in all I did. It was advantageous to our intercourse that I was ten years older than he. He sat whole evenings with me, in earnest conversation on art and nature and other excellent topics. We often sat together deep into the night, and not unfrequently we both fell asleep on one sofa. We worked together for fifty years, and it is no wonder that we at last achieved something."

"So thorough a cultivation as the Grand Duke seems to have received is probably rare among princes."

"Very rare!" returned Goethe. "There are indeed many capable of conversing cleverly on every subject; but they have it not at heart, and only dabble on the surface. And it is no wonder, if we consider the frightful dissipations and distractions that accompany a court life, to which a young prince is exposed. He must take notice of everything; he must know a bit of this and a bit of that: nothing can take root; and it requires a strong natural foundation not to end in smoke. The Grand Duke was indeed a born great man; in this all is said, and all is done."

"With all his highly scientific and intellectual tendencies," said I, "he appears to have understood the art of government."

"He was a man of one piece," said Goethe; "with him everything flowed from one great source. As the whole was good, the individual parts were good, let him do as he might. But he possessed three especially useful qualities for carrying on a government. He had the talent of discriminating between minds and characters, and of placing everyone in his proper place. Then—another gift as great, if not greater: he was animated by the noblest benevolence, by the purest philanthropy, and with his whole soul aimed only at what was best. He always thought first of the happiness of his country, and only at last a little of himself. His hand was always ready and open to meet worthy men, and to promote worthy objects. There was a great deal that was divine in him. He would have liked to promote the happiness of all mankind. Love engenders love, and one who is loved can easily govern.

"Thirdly, he was greater than those who surrounded him. After ten voices heard, he perceived an eleventh and a better one, in himself. Strange whispers passed him unheeded, and he was not easily led to commit anything unprincely by setting aside real merit on which a doubt had been cast and taking worthless ragamuffins under his protection. He surveyed everything himself, judged for himself, and had in all cases the surest basis in himself. Moreover, he was of a silent nature, and his words were always followed by action."

"How it grieves me," said I, "that I knew nothing of him but his exterior! Still, that made a deep impression. I see him still in his old droshky, in a worn-out grey cloak and military cap, smoking a cigar, as he drove to the chase, with his favourite hound by his side. I have never seen him drive otherwise than in that ugly old droshky. And never with more than two horses. An equipage with six horses, and coats with orders, do not seem to have been to his taste."

"That sort of thing," returned Goethe, "is now almost out of date with princes generally. The only point now is what a man weighs in the scale of humanity; all the rest is nothing. A coat with a star, and a chariot with six horses, at all events, impose on the rudest multitude only, and scarcely that. The Grand Duke's old droshky barely hung upon springs. Whoever drove with him had to put up with some desperate shocks. But that was his way; he liked the rough and inconvenient, and was an enemy to effeminacy."

"We see traces of that in your poem of *Ilmenau*," said I, "in which you appear to have drawn him to the life."

"He was then very young," returned Goethe, "and we certainly led rather a mad life. He was like a fine wine, still in a high state of fermentation. He did not know how to expend his powers, and we often nearly broke our necks. Fagging all day long on horseback, over hedges and ditches, through rivers, up hill and down hill; and then at night encamping in the open air, by a fire in the wood—this was what he liked. To have inherited a dukedom was in him nothing; but to have taken one by storm he would have considered something.

"The poem of *Ilmenau* contains, as an episode, an epoch which, in the year 1783, when I wrote it, lay many years behind us; so that I could describe myself in it as a historical personage, and could hold a conversation with the self of former years. There occurs in it, as you know, a night-scene after one of the break-neck chases on the mountain. We had built ourselves at the foot of a rock some little huts and covered them with fir branches, that we might pass the night on dry ground. Before the huts we burned several fires, and we cooked and spread out the produce of the chase. Knebel, whose tobacco pipe was not then cold, sat next to the fire and enlivened the company with dry jokes, while the wine-flask passed from hand to hand. Sechendorf the slender, with his long thin limbs, had comfortably stretched himself out by the trunk of a tree, and was humming all sorts of poetics. On one side, in a similar little hut, lay the Grand Duke, in a deep slumber. I myself sat before him, by the glimmering light of the coals, absorbed in grave thoughts, suffering accessions of regret for the mischief done by my writings. Knebel and Sechendorf do not appear to me to be badly drawn, neither is the young prince, in the gloomy impetuosity of his twentieth year.

He hurries onwards, inconsiderate,
  No rock appears too steep, no bridge too small,
Ghastly mischances ever on him wait,
  And into Pain's hard arms he oft must fall.
The wild unruly impulse in his breast,
  Now here, now there, still sets him roving;
At last he takes his gloomy rest,
  When weary of his gloomy moving.
Joyless, though feeling no control,
  Sullen, though wild in happiest days,
Wounded and fagged in body and in soul,
  On a hard couch his frame he lays.

"That is he exactly. Not the slightest touch is exaggerated. Nevertheless, the Duke soon worked himself out of this 'storm-and-pressure period,'[1] into a state of useful serenity; so that on his birthday in the year 1783 I could well remind him of this image of his earlier days.

"I will not deny that in the beginning he caused me much trouble and anxiety. Yet his noble nature soon cleared itself and formed itself to the highest degree of perfection, so that it was a pleasure to live and act with him."

"In these early times you made a tour with him through Switzerland," remarked I.

"He was fond of travelling," returned Goethe, "not so much to amuse himself as to have his eyes and ears open and to notice whatever was good and useful, in order to introduce it into his own country. On this account, agriculture, cattle-breeding, and industry altogether, are infinitely indebted to him. His tendencies were not generally personal or egotistical, but of a purely productive kind; indeed, productive for the general good. He has thus acquired a name far beyond this little country."

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[1] The "storm-and-pressure [*Sturm und Drang*] period" of German literature, which takes its name from one of Klinger's plays, is that period of unfettered impulse which is particularly represented by Schiller's *Robbers*.—J. O.

"His careless, simple exterior," said I, "appeared to intimate that he did not seek renown and set little store by it. It seemed as if he had become renowned without any effort of his own, merely by means of his own quiet excellence."

"There is something peculiar in that," returned Goethe. "Wood burns because it has the proper stuff for that purpose in it; and a man becomes renowned because he has the necessary stuff in him. Renown is not to be sought, and all pursuit of it is vain. A person may indeed by skilful conduct and various artificial means make a sort of name for himself. But if the inner jewel is wanting, all is vanity and will not last a day. Just the same is it with popular favour. He did not seek it, and he by no means flattered people; but the nation loved him, because it felt he had a heart for it."

Goethe mentioned the other members of the Grand Duke's family, and how the mark of a noble character ran through them all. He spoke of the benevolence of the present Regent, and of the great hopes entertained of the young Prince; and expatiated with evident love upon the rare qualities of the now-reigning Princess; who, in the noblest spirit, was applying great means to alleviate sufferings and to make seeds of good germinate. "She has at all times been a good angel to her country," said he, "and she becomes so more and more. I have known the Grand Duchess since the year 1805, and have had many opportunities of admiring her mind and character. She is one of the best and most distinguished women of our time, and would be so if she were not a princess. And this is the great point: that even when the purple has been laid aside, much that is great—nay, what is really the best—still remains."

We then spoke of the unity of Germany, and in what sense it was possible and desirable.

"I am not uneasy," said Goethe, "about the unity of Germany; our good high roads and future railroads will of themselves do their part. But, above all, may Germany be one in mutual love! and may it always be one against the foreign foe! May it be one, so that German dollars and groschen may be of equal value throughout the whole empire! one, so that my travelling-chest may pass unopened through all the six-and-thirty states! May it be one, so that the town passport of a citizen of Weimar may not be considered insufficient, like that of a *foreigner*, by the frontier officer of a large neighbouring state! May there be no more talk about inland and outland among the German states! In fine, may Germany be one in weight and measure, in trade and commerce, and a hundred similar things!

"But if we imagine that the unity of Germany consists in this very great empire having a single great capital, and that this one great capital would conduce to the development of great individual talent, or to the welfare of the great mass of the people—we are in error. A state has been justly compared to a living body with many limbs; and the capital may be compared to the heart, from which life and prosperity flow to the individual members, near and far. But, if the members be very distant from the heart, the life that flows to them will become weaker and weaker. A clever Frenchman, I think Dupin, has sketched a chart of the state of culture in France, and has exhibited the greater or less enlightenment of the different departments by a lighter or darker colour. Now, some departments, particularly in the southern provinces remote from the capital, are represented by a perfectly black colour, as a sign of the great darkness prevailing there. But would that be so if *la belle France*, instead of one great focus, had ten foci, whence life and light might proceed?

"Whence is Germany great, but by the admirable culture of the people, which equally pervades all parts of the kingdom? But does not this proceed from the various seats of government? and do not these foster and support it? Suppose, for centuries past, we had had in Germany only the two capitals, Vienna and Berlin, or only one of these: I should like to see how it would have fared with German culture, or even with generally diffused opulence that goes hand in hand with culture. Germany has about twenty universities distributed about the whole empire, and about a hundred public libraries similarly distributed. There are also a great many collections of art and collections of objects belonging to all the kingdoms of nature; for every prince has taken care to bring around him these useful and beautiful objects. There are gymnasia and schools for arts and industry in abundance—nay, there is scarcely a German village without its school. And how does France stand with respect to this last point!

"Then look at the German theatres, exceeding seventy, and not to be despised as supporters and promoters of a higher cultivation of the people. In no country are the taste for and the practice of music and singing so widely spread as in Germany; and even that is something!

"And now think of such cities as Dresden, Munich, Stuttgart, Cassel, Brunswick, Hanover; think of the great elements of life comprised within these cities; think of the effect they have on neighbouring provinces; and ask yourself if all this would have been, if they had not for a long time been residences of princes?

"Frankfort, Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübeck, are great and brilliant; their effect on the prosperity of Germany is incalculable. But would they remain what they are, if they lost their own sovereignty and became incorporated with any great German kingdom as provincial towns? I see reason to doubt."

Tuesday, November 18, 1828.

Goethe spoke of a new article in the *Edinburgh Review*. "It is a pleasure to me," said he, "to see the elevation and excellence to which the English critics now rise. There is not a trace of their former pedantry, its place is occupied by great qualities. In the last article—the one on German literature—you will find this remark: 'There are people among poets who have a tendency always to occupy themselves with things which another likes to drive from his mind.' What say you to this? There we know at once where we are, and how we have to classify a great number of our most modern literati."

Tuesday, December 16, 1828.

I dined to-day with Goethe alone, in his work-room. We talked on various literary topics.

"The Germans," said he, "cannot cease to be Philistines. They are now squabbling about some verses printed both in Schiller's works and in mine, and fancy it is important to ascertain which really belong to Schiller and which to me: as if anything could be gained by the investigation—as if the existence of the things were not enough. Friends, such as Schiller and I, intimate for years, with the same interests, in habits of daily intercourse, and under reciprocal obligations, live so completely *into* one another, that it is hardly possible to decide to which of the two the particular thoughts belong. We have made many distichs together; sometimes I gave the thought and Schiller made the verse; sometimes the contrary; sometimes he made one line, and I the other. What matters the mine and thine? Only a thorough Philistine would attach the slightest importance to the solution of such questions."

"Something similar," said I, "often happens in the literary world; for instance, when people doubt the originality of this or that celebrated man, and seek to trace out the sources whence he obtained his cultivation."

"Ridiculous!" said Goethe; "we might as well question a strong man about the oxen, sheep, and swine, he has eaten, which have given him strength.

"We are indeed born with faculties; but we owe our development to a thousand influences of the great world, from which we appropriate what we can and what is suitable. I owe much to the Greeks and French; I am infinitely indebted to Shakespeare, Sterne, and Goldsmith; but in saying this I do not show the sources of my culture—that would be an endless as well as an unnecessary task. What is important is to have a soul that loves truth and assimilates it wherever found.

"Besides, the world is now so old, so many eminent men have lived and thought for thousands of years, that there is little new to be discovered or expressed. Even my theory of colours is not entirely new. Plato, Leonardo da Vinci, and many other excellent men, have before me found and expressed the same thing in a detached form; my merit is, that I have found it also, that I have said it again, and that I have striven to bring the truth once more into a confused world.

"The truth must be repeated over and over again; because error is repeatedly preached among us, not only by individuals, but by the masses. In periodicals and cyclopædias, in schools and universities—everywhere, in fact, error prevails, and is quite easy in the feeling that it has a decided majority on its side.

"Often, too, people teach truth and error together, and stick to the latter. Thus, a short time ago, I read in an English cyclopædia the doctrine of the origin of Blue. First came the correct view of Leonardo da Vinci; but then followed, as quietly as possible, the error of Newton, coupled with remarks that this was to be adhered to because it was the view generally adopted."

I could not help laughing. "Every wax-taper," I said, "every illuminated cloud of kitchen-smoke that has anything dark behind it, every morning mist when it lies before a steady spot, daily convinces me of the origin of blue colour, and makes me comprehend the blueness of the sky. What the Newtonians mean when they say that the air has the property of absorbing other colours, and of repelling blue alone, I cannot at all understand, nor do I see what use or pleasure is to be derived from a doctrine in which all thought stands still and all sound observation completely vanishes."

"My good innocent friend," said Goethe, "these people do not care a jot about thoughts and observations. They are satisfied if they have only words they can pass as current, as was well shown by my own Mephistopheles:

> Mind, above all, you stick to words,
> Thus through the safe gate you will go
> Into the fane of certainty;
> For when ideas begin to fail
> A word will aptly serve your turn, [etc.]"

Goethe recited this passage laughing. "It is a good thing," said he, "that all is already in print; and I shall go on printing as long as I have anything to say against false doctrine and its disseminators.

"We have now excellent men rising up in natural science," he continued, after a pause, "and I am glad to see them. Others begin well, but afterwards fall off; their predominating subjectivity leads them astray. Others, again, dwell too much on facts, and collect a vast number by which nothing is proved. On the whole, there is a want of originating mind to penetrate to original phenomena and to master particular appearances."

A short visit interrupted our discourse. When we were again alone, the conversation returned to poetry; and I told Goethe I had of late been once more studying his little poems, and had dwelt especially on two of them—the ballad [1] about the children and the old man, and the *Happy Couple* (die glücklichen Gatten).

"I myself set some value on these two poems," said Goethe, "although the German public have hitherto not been able to make much out of them."

"In the ballad," I said, "a very copious subject is brought into a very limited compass, by means of all sorts of poetical forms and artifices. I especially praise the expedient of making the old man tell the children's past history down to the present, the rest being developed before our eyes."

"I carried the ballad a long time in my head," said Goethe,

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[1] This poem is simply entitled *Ballade*, and begins "Herein, O du Guter! du Alter herein!"—J. O.

"before I wrote it down. Whole years of reflection are comprised in it, and I made three or four trials before I could reduce it to its present shape.

"The poem of the *Happy Couple*," continued Goethe, "is likewise rich in *motifs*; whole landscapes and passages of human life appear in it, warmed by the sunlight of a charming spring sky, which is diffused over the whole. I have always liked that poem, and I am glad you are interested. The ending of the whole pleasantry with a double christening is, I think, pretty enough."

We then came to the *Citizen-General* (Bürger-General); with respect to which I said I had been lately reading this piece with an Englishman and we had both felt the strongest desire to see it on the stage. "In the spirit of the work," said I, "there is nothing antiquated; and in the details of dramatic development there is not a touch that does not seem designed for the stage."

"It was a very good piece in its time," said Goethe, "and caused us many a pleasant evening. It was, indeed, excellently cast, and had been so admirably studied that the dialogue moved along as glibly as possible. Malcomi played Märten; nothing could be more perfect."

"The part of Schnaps," said I, "seems to me no less felicitous. Indeed, I should not think there were many better or more thankful parts in the repertoire. There is in this personage, as in the whole piece, a clearness, an actual presence, to the utmost extent that can be desired for a theatre. The scene where he comes in with the knapsack and produces the things one after another, where he puts the moustache on Märten, and decks himself with the cap of liberty, uniform, and sword, is among the best."

"That scene," said Goethe, "used to be very successful on our stage. The knapsack, with the articles in it, had really a historical existence. I found it in the time of the Revolution, on my travels along the French border, when the emigrants on their flight had passed through, and one of them might have lost it or thrown it away. The articles it contained were just the same as in the piece. I wrote the scene upon it; and the knapsack, with all its appurtenances, was always introduced, to the delight of our actors."

The question whether the *Citizen-General* could still be played with any interest or profit was discussed.

Goethe then asked about my progress in French literature;

and I told him I still from time to time took up Voltaire, whose great talent delighted me.

"I still know but little of him," said I; "I keep to his short poems addressed to persons, which I read over and over again, and which I cannot lay aside."

"Indeed," said Goethe, "all is good that is written by so great a genius as Voltaire, though I cannot excuse all his profanity. But you are right to give time to those little poems addressed to persons; they are among the most charming of his works. Not a line but is full of thought: clear, bright, and graceful."

"And we see his relations to all the great and mighty of the world, and notice with pleasure the distinguished position taken by himself: he seems to feel equal to the highest, and we never find that any majesty can embarrass his free mind even for a moment."

"Yes," said Goethe, "he bore himself like a man of rank. And with all his freedom and audacity, he ever kept within the limits of propriety, which is perhaps saying still more. I may cite the Empress of Austria as an authority in such matters; she has repeatedly assured me that in those poems of Voltaire's there is no trace of crossing the line of *convenance*."

"Does your excellency remember the short poem in which he makes to the Princess of Prussia, afterwards Queen of Sweden, a pretty declaration of love, by saying that he dreamed of being elevated to the royal dignity?"

"It is one of his best," said Goethe, and he recited the lines:

> Je vous aimais, princesse, et j'osais vous le dire;
> Les Dieux à mon reveil ne m'ont pas tout oté,
> Je n'ai perdu que mon empire.

"How pretty that is! And never had poet his talent so completely at command every moment. I remember an anecdote of his visit to Madame du Châtelet. Just as he was going away, and the carriage was standing at the door, he received a letter from a great number of young girls in a neighbouring convent, who wished to play the *Death of Julius Cæsar* on the birthday of their abbess, and begged him to write them a prologue. The case was too delicate for a refusal; so Voltaire at once called for pen and paper, and, standing, wrote the desired prologue upon the mantelpiece. It is a poem of perhaps twenty lines, thoroughly digested, finished, perfectly suited to the occasion; in short, of the very best."

"I am very desirous to read it," said I.

"I doubt," said Goethe, "whether you will find it in your collection: it has only lately come to light. Indeed, he wrote hundreds of such poems, of which many may still be scattered about among private persons."

"I found, of late, a passage in Lord Byron," said I, "by which I was pleased to see that even Byron had an extraordinary esteem for Voltaire. We may see in his works how much he liked to read, study, and make use of Voltaire."

"Byron," said Goethe, "knew too well where anything was to be got, and was too clever not to draw from this universal source of light."

The conversation then turned entirely upon Byron, and several of his works; and Goethe repeated many of his former expressions of admiration.

"To all your excellency says of Byron," said I, "I agree from the bottom of my heart; but, however great and remarkable he may be as a talent, I much doubt whether a decided gain for *pure human culture* is to be derived from his writings."

"There, I must contradict you," said Goethe; "the audacity and grandeur of Byron must certainly tend towards culture. We should take care not to be always looking for it in the decidedly pure and moral. Everything that is great promotes cultivation as soon as we are aware of it."

(Sup.) Sunday, December 21, 1828.

[Eckermann relates another of his dreams: how in a foreign town two fiery points fell out of a bright yellow mist, and, on his coming up amid a crowd, proved to be Mephistopheles and Faust—the former gentlemanlike and without malice, his devilhood indicated only by the graceful curve of two little horns like the curve of hair on a forehead; Faust with astonishing nobility of expression: both of them youthful. He walked away conversing with these two, the crowd dispersing.]

1829

Wednesday, February 4, 1829.

"I HAVE continued to read Schubart," said Goethe. "He is a remarkable man, and says much that is excellent if we translate it into our own language. The chief tendency of his book is to show that there is a point of view beyond the sphere of philosophy—namely, that of common sense; and that art and science, apart from philosophy, and by means of a free action of natural human powers, have always thriven best. This is grist for our mill. I have always kept myself free from philosophy. The common-sense point of view was also mine; Schubart confirms what I have been saying and doing all my life.

"The only thing I cannot commend in him is this: he knows certain things better than he will confess, and so does not go quite honestly to work. Like Hegel, he would bring the Christian religion into philosophy, though it really has nothing to do with it. Christianity has a might of its own, by which dejected suffering humanity is re-elevated from time to time; when we grant it this power, it is raised above all philosophy and needs no support therefrom. Neither does the philosopher need the countenance of religion to prove such doctrines as eternal duration. Man should believe in immortality; he has a right to this belief; it corresponds with the wants of his nature, and he may believe in the promises of religion. But if the philosopher tries to deduce the immortality of the soul from a legend, that is very weak and inefficient. To me, the eternal existence of my soul is proved from my idea of activity; if I work on incessantly till my death, nature is bound to give me another form of existence when the present one can no longer sustain my spirit." [1]

Goethe had a portfolio, full of drawings and engravings, brought. After he had looked at some, he showed me a fine engraving after a picture of Ostade's.

"Here," said he, "you have the scene of our goodman and goodwife."

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[1] A curious conclusion, for a champion of common sense as against philosophy!

I saw the interior of a peasant's dwelling; with kitchen, parlour, and bedroom, all in one. Man and wife sat opposite one another; the wife spinning, the husband winding yarn, a child at their feet. In the background was a bed, and everywhere there was nothing but the rudest and most necessary household utensils. The door led at once into the open air. This idea of a happy marriage in a humble condition was perfectly conveyed by this engraving; comfort, content, and a certain luxuriance in the loving emotions of matrimony, were expressed in the faces of both man and wife as they looked upon one another.

"The longer we look at this picture," said I, "the happier we feel."

"It is the charm of sensuousness," said Goethe, "with which no art can dispense, and which reigns in subjects of this kind. In works of a higher kind, when the artist goes into the ideal, it is difficult to keep up the proper degree of sensuousness, so as not to become dry and cold. Youth or age may be favourable or impeding; hence the artist should reflect on his age, and select his subjects accordingly. I succeeded with my *Iphigenia* and *Tasso*, because I was young enough to penetrate and animate the ideal of the stuff with sensuous feeling. *Now*, such ideal subjects would no longer be suited to me, and I do right in selecting those whose material already contains some sensuousness. If the Genasts stay here, I shall write two pieces for you, both in one act and in prose. One will be of the most cheerful kind, and end with a wedding; the other will be shocking and terrible, and two corpses will be on the stage at the end—this one dates from the time of Schiller, who wrote a scene of it at my request. I have long thought over both these subjects, and they are so completely present to my mind that I could dictate either of them in a week, as I did my *Citizen-General*."

"Do so," said I. "Write the two pieces at all events; it will be a recreation to you after the *Wanderjahre*, and will operate like a little journey. And how pleased the world would be, if, against everybody's expectation, you did something more for the stage."

"As I said," continued Goethe, "if the Genasts stay here, I am not sure that I shall not indulge in this little pleasantry. But without this prospect there is little inducement; a play on paper is nothing. The poet must know the means he has to work with, and must adapt his characters to the actors who are to play them. If I can reckon upon Genast and his wife, and take also La Roche, Herr Winterberger, and Madame Seidel, I know what I have to do, and can be certain my intentions will be carried out.

"Writing for the stage," he continued, "is peculiar, and he that does not understand it thoroughly had better leave it alone. Everyone thinks an interesting fact will appear interesting on the boards—nothing of the kind! Things may be very pretty to read and very pretty to think about, and yet yield a very different effect on the stage: what has charmed us in the closet will probably fall flat on the boards. If anyone reads my *Hermann and Dorothea*, he thinks it might be brought out at the theatre. Töpfer has been inveigled into the experiment; but what is it, what effect does it produce, especially if not played in a first-rate manner? and who can say that it is in every respect a good piece? Writing for the stage is a trade to be understood, requiring possession of a talent. Both are uncommon, and where they are not combined we shall scarcely have any good result."

Monday, February 9, 1829.

Goethe talked of the *Wahlverwandtschaften*: remarking that a person whom he had never seen or known in his life had supposed the character of Mittler to be meant for himself.

"There must be some truth in the character," said he, "and it must have existed more than once in the world. Indeed, there is not a line in the *Wahlverwandtschaften* that is not taken from my own experience; and there is more in it than can be gathered from a first reading."

Tuesday, February 10, 1829.

I found Goethe surrounded by maps and plans referring to the building of the Bremen harbour, in which he took an interest.

There was then much talk about Merck; and Goethe read me a poetical epistle written from Merck to Wieland in 1776, in very spirited but somewhat hard doggerel verse (*Knüttelverse*). The lively production is especially directed against Jacobi, whom Wieland seems to have over-estimated in a critique in the *Merkur*—a fault Merck cannot pardon.

We talked of the state of culture at the time, and how difficult it was to emerge from the so-called storm-and-pressure period to a higher culture; of his first years in Weimar; of the poetic talent's conflict with that reality which he was for his own higher advantage obliged to encounter, through his position at court and the various services demanded of him. Hence nothing poetical of importance was produced during the first ten years. He read several fragments; and showed how he was saddened by love-affairs, and how his father was always impatient of the court life.

Then we came to the advantage that he did not change his place of abode and was not obliged to go twice through the same experience; then came his flight to Italy to revive his poetic power—the superstitious fancy that he would not succeed if anyone knew about it, and the profound secrecy in consequence; how he wrote to the Grand Duke from Rome, and returned from Italy with great claims upon him.

Next we talked of the Duchess Amelia—a perfect princess, with perfectly sound sense and a taste for the joy of life. She was very fond of Goethe's mother, and wished her to come to Weimar; but he opposed it.

Then about the first beginnings of *Faust*.—"*Faust* sprang up at the same time as *Werther*. I brought it with me in 1775 to Weimar; I had written it on letter-paper; and had not made an erasure, for I took care not to write down a line that was not worthy to remain."

Wednesday, February 11, 1829.

Oberbau-Director Coudray dined with me at Goethe's house. He spoke much of the Female School of Industry and the Orphan's Institute, as the best establishments of their kind in this country. The former was founded by the Grand Duchess; the latter by the Grand Duke Charles Augustus. Much was said about theatrical decoration and road-making. Coudray showed Goethe a sketch for a prince's chapel. With respect to the place of the ducal chair, Goethe made some objections, to which Coudray yielded.

Soret came after dinner. Goethe showed us once more the pictures of Herr von Reutern.

Thursday, February 12, 1829.

Goethe read me the thoroughly noble poem, *Kein Wesen kann zu nichts zerfallen* (No being can dissolve to nothing), which he had lately written.

"I wrote this poem," said he, "in contradiction to my lines:

Denn alles muss zu nichts zerfallen
Wenn es im Seyn beharren will, etc.

For all must melt away to nothing
Would it continue still to be.

—which are stupid; and which my Berlin friends, at the late assembly of scientists, set up in golden letters, to my annoyance."

The conversation turned on the great mathematician Lagrange, whose character Goethe extolled.

"He was a good man," said he, "and on that very account a great man. For when a good man is gifted with talent, he always works morally for the salvation of the world—as poet, philosopher, artist, or what not.

"I am glad you had an opportunity yesterday of knowing Coudray better. He says little in general society; but, here among ourselves, you have seen the excellent mind and character of the man. He had at first much opposition to encounter; but he has now fought through it all, and enjoys the entire confidence and favour of the court. Coudray is one of the most skilful architects of our time. He has adhered to me and I to him, and this has been of service to us both. If I had but known him fifty years ago!"

We then talked about Goethe's own architectural knowledge. I remarked that he must have acquired much in Italy.

"Italy gave me an idea of earnestness and greatness," said he, "but no practical skill. The building of the castle here in Weimar advanced me more than anything. I was obliged to assist, and even to make drawings of entablatures. I had a certain advantage over the professional people, because I was superior to them in intention."

We talked of Zelter.

"I have a letter from him," said Goethe, "complaining that the performance of the oratorio of the *Messiah* was spoiled for him by one of his female scholars, who sang an aria too weakly and sentimentally. Weakness is a characteristic of our age. My hypothesis is, that it is a consequence of the efforts made in Germany to get rid of the French. Painters, scientists, sculptors, musicians, poets—with but few exceptions, all are weak, and the general mass is no better."

"Yet I do not give up hope," said I, "of seeing suitable music composed for *Faust*."

"Quite impossible!" said Goethe. "The awful and repulsive passages that must occasionally occur are not in the style of the time. The music should be like that of *Don Juan*. Mozart should have composed for *Faust*. Meyerbeer would perhaps be capable; but he would not touch anything of the kind[1]; he is too much engaged with the Italian theatres."

Afterwards—I do not recollect in what connection—Goethe made the following important remark:

"All that is great and skilful exists with the minority. There have been ministers who have had both king and people against them, and have carried out their great plans alone. It is not to be imagined that reason can ever be popular. Passions and feelings may become popular; reason always remains the sole property of a few eminent individuals."

Friday, February 13, 1829.

Dined with Goethe alone.

"After I have finished the *Wanderjahre*," said he, "I shall turn to botany again to continue the translation with Soret; I only fear it may lead me too far, and at last prove an incubus. Great secrets still lie hidden; much I know, and of much I have an intimation. I will confide to you something that will sound odd.

"The plant goes from knot to knot, closing at last with the flower and the seed. In the animal kingdom it is the same. The caterpillar and the tape-worm go from knot to knot, and at last form heads. With the higher animals and man, the vertebral bones grow one upon another, and terminate with the head, in which the powers are concentrated.

"With corporations it is the same as with individuals. The bees, a series of individuals, connected one with another at least as a community, produce something that is the conclusion and may be regarded as the head of the whole—the queen-bee. How this is managed is a mystery hard to be expressed, but I have my thoughts upon it.

"Thus does a nation bring forth its heroes, who stand at the head like demigods to protect and save.[2] Thus were the poetic powers of the French concentrated in Voltaire. Such heads of a nation are great in the generation in which they work; many last longer, but the greater part have their places supplied by others and are forgotten by posterity."

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[1] It must be borne in mind that this was said before the appearance of *Robert le Diable*, which was first produced in Paris in November 1831.—J. O.

[2] The logic of this is extremely loose. If the hero is analogous to the seed of the plant and the queen of the hive, he must be the protected rather than the protector—the object of solicitude rather than the saviour.

Goethe then spoke of the scientists, with whom the great point was to prove their opinion.

"Herr von Buch," said he, "has published a new book, which contains a hypothesis in its very title. He has to treat of the blocks of granite that are scattered about in various directions without our knowing how or whence they came. But as Herr von Buch entertains the hypothesis that such blocks have been cast forth, and shivered by some internal force, he indicates this in his title, by making mention of dispersed (*Zerstreut*) granite-blocks, so that the step to dispersion (*Zerstreuung*) is very short, and the unsuspecting reader finds himself in the toils of error he does not know how.

"You must be old to see all this, and have money enough to pay for your experience. Every *bon mot* I utter costs me a purseful of money; half a million of my private fortune has passed through my hands that I might learn what I know now—not only the whole of my father's fortune; but also my own salary, and my large literary income for more than fifty years. I have also seen a million and a half expended for great objects by the princes with whom I have been intimately connected, and in whose progress, success, and failure, I have been interested.

"More than mere talent is required to become a proficient. The person must also live amid important circumstances, and have an opportunity of watching the cards held by the players of the age, and of participating in their gain and loss.

"Without my attempts in natural science, I should never have learned to know mankind as it is. In nothing else can we so closely approach pure contemplation and thought, so closely observe the errors of the senses and of the understanding, the weak and the strong points of character. All is more or less pliant and wavering, is more or less manageable; but Nature understands no jesting; she is always true, always serious, always severe; she is always right, and the errors and faults are always those of man. The man incapable of appreciating her she despises; and only to the apt, the pure, and the true, does she resign herself, and reveal her secrets.

"The Understanding will not reach her; man must be capable of elevating himself to the highest Reason, to come into contact with the Divinity, which manifests itself in the primitive phenomena (*Urphänomenen*), which dwells behind them, and from which they proceed.[1]

"The Divinity works in the living, not in the dead; in the becoming and changing, not in the become and the fixed. Therefore Reason, with its tendency towards the divine, has only to do with the becoming, the living; but Understanding with the become, the already fixed, that it may make use of it.

"Hence, mineralogy is a science for the Understanding, for practical life; for its subjects are something dead which cannot rise again, and there is no room for synthesis.

"The subjects of meteorology are, indeed, something living, which we daily see working and producing; they presuppose a synthesis—only the co-operating circumstances are so many that man is not equal to this synthesis and therefore uselessly wearies himself in observations and inquiries. We steer by hypotheses to imaginary islands; but the proper synthesis will probably remain an undiscovered country; and I do not wonder at this, when I consider how difficult it is to obtain any synthesis even in such simple things as plants and colours."

Sunday, February 15, 1829.

Goethe received me with much praise, on account of my arrangement of the natural-historical aphorisms for the *Wanderjahre*. "Devote yourself to nature," said he; "you are born for that purpose; and, as the next task, write a compendium of the *Theory of Colours*." We spoke much on this subject.

A chest arrived from the Lower Rhine, containing some antique coins that had been dug up, minerals, small cathedral-figures, and carnival-poems — all of which were unpacked after dinner.

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[1] This paragraph and the next presume knowledge of the philosophical distinction between Reason and Understanding. Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy* says: "To those who hold this distinction, the understanding is the instrument of scientific knowledge, the reason the instrument of the philosophic [i.e. metaphysical]. . . . The understanding is thought working according to the schematized categories, and so having validity in relation to experience; reason is thought working without reference to the application of concepts to the material of sense, hence soaring into the supersensuous, and so, while giving us certain ideals of a regulative value, sharing no positive (or constitutive) worth." Elsewhere, Baldwin, apparently recognizing that this involves a special faculty of Reason, says: "The term is still applied to the mind, in so far as it is supposed to exercise this function [of apprehending "the real nature of the world"—i.e. of the universe], although the doctrine of particular faculties has been generally given up."

The distinction was due to Kant.

Tuesday, February 17, 1829.

We talked a great deal about Goethe's *Grosskophta*.

"Lavater," said Goethe, "believed in Cagliostro and his wonders. When the impostor was unmasked, Lavater maintained, 'This is another Cagliostro, the Cagliostro who did the wonders was a holy person.'

"Lavater was a truly good man, but subject to strong delusions; the whole sole truth was not to his mind, he deceived himself and others. This made a perfect breach between him and me. The last time I saw him was in Zurich; and he did not see me. I was coming in disguise down an avenue; seeing him approach, I stepped aside, and he passed without recognizing me. He walked like a crane, and therefore figures as a crane on the Blocksberg."[1]

I asked whether Lavater observed nature, as we might almost infer from the *Physiognomy*.

"Not in the least," said Goethe. "His tendency was wholly towards the moral—the religious. That part of his *Physiognomy* which relates to the skulls of animals he got from me."

The conversation turned upon the French—upon the lectures of Guizot, Villemain, and Cousin. Goethe spoke with high esteem of the point of view taken by these men; saying that they observed everything on a free and new side, and always went straight to their mark.

"It is," said Goethe, "as if till now we had reached a garden through roundabout crooked ways; these men, however, have been bold and free enough to pull down a wall, and to put a door so that we get at once into the broadest walk of the garden."

From Cousin we passed to Indian philosophy.

"This philosophy," said Goethe, "if what the Englishman tells us is true, has nothing foreign; on the contrary, the epochs through which we all pass are repeated in it. When we are children, we are sensualists; idealists when we love, and attribute to the beloved object qualities she does not naturally possess. Love wavers; we doubt her fidelity, and are sceptics before we think of it. The rest of life is indifferent; we let it go as it will, and end, like the Indian philosophers, with quietism.

"In the German philosophy there are still two great works to do. Kant did an infinite deal, by writing the *Critique of Pure Reason*; but the circle is not yet complete. Now, some able man should write the *Critique of the Senses and*

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[1] That is to say, in the intermezzo in *Faust*.—J. O.

Understanding of Man; and, if this could be as well done, we should have little more to desire in German philosophy.

"Hegel," continued Goethe, "has written, in the Berlin *Jahrbücher*, a criticism upon Hamann, which I of late have read over and over again, and must highly praise. Hegel's judgments as a critic have always been excellent.

"Villemain, too, stands very high in criticism. The French will indeed never see another talent to cope with Voltaire; but Villemain is so far elevated above Voltaire by his intellectual point of view as to be able to judge him in his virtues and his faults."

Wednesday, February 18, 1829.

We talked of the Theory of Colours; and among other things about drinking-glasses, the dull figures on which appear yellow against the light, and blue against the dark, and therefore allow the observation of a primitive phenomenon.

"The highest that man can attain in these matters," said Goethe, "is astonishment; if the primary phenomenon causes this, let him be satisfied; more it cannot bring; and he should forbear to seek for anything further behind it: here is the limit. But the sight of a primitive phenomenon is generally not enough for people. They think they must go still further; and are thus like children, who, after peeping into a mirror, turn it round directly to see what is on the other side."

The conversation turned upon Merck, and I asked whether he had ever meddled with natural science.

"Yes," said Goethe, "he had even fine collections. Merck was an extremely many-sided man. He loved art also; and if he saw a good work in the hands of a Philistine whom he suspected of not knowing its value, he used every means to get it for his own collection. In such matters he had no conscience; he considered all means fair, and did not despise even a sort of sublime fraud, if he could not attain his object otherwise."

Goethe related some interesting examples of this peculiarity.

"A man like Merck," continued he, "will not again be born; and if he were, the world would model him into a very different person. That was a good time when Merck and I were young! German literature was yet a clean tablet, on which it was hoped to paint good things with pleasure. Now, it is so scribbled over and soiled that there is no pleasure in looking at it, and a wise man does not know whereabouts he can inscribe anything."

Thursday, February 19, 1829.

Dined with Goethe *tête-à-tête* in his work-room. He was very cheerful, and told me that much good had lately befallen him, and that an affair with Artaria[1] and the court had come to a happy termination.

We then talked a great deal about *Egmont*, which had been represented according to Schiller's version on the preceding evening. The injury done to the piece by this version was brought under discussion.

"For many reasons," said I, "the Regent should not have been omitted; she is thoroughly necessary to the piece. Not only does this princess impart to the whole a higher, nobler character; but moreover the political relations, especially of the Spanish court, are brought much more clearly to view by her conversation with Machiavelli."

"Unquestionably," said Goethe. "And then Egmont gains in dignity from the lustre that the partiality of this princess casts upon him; while Clara also seems exalted when we see that, vanquishing even princesses, she alone has all Egmont's love. These are very delicate effects, which cannot be obliterated without compromising the whole."

"It seems to me, too, that, where there are so many important male parts, a single female personage like Clara appears weak and overpowered. By means of the Regent the picture is better balanced. It is not enough that the Regent is talked of; her personal entrance makes the impression."

"You judge rightly," said Goethe. "When I wrote the piece I weighed everything well, as you may imagine; hence it is no wonder that the whole materially suffers, when there is torn out of it a principal figure conceived for the sake of the whole—through which the whole exists. But Schiller had something violent in his nature; he often acted too much according to a preconceived idea, without sufficient regard to the subject he had to treat."

"You may be blamed also, for allowing the alteration and granting him such unlimited liberty in so important a matter."

"We often act more from indifference than from kindness," replied Goethe. "Then, at that time, I was deeply occupied with other things. I had no interest for Egmont or for the stage, so I let Schiller have his own way. Now, it is at any rate a consolation for me that the work exists in print, and that there are theatres where people are wise enough to perform it as it is written, without abbreviation."

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[1] The Index to Houben's reissue describes Artaria as a Mannheim art-dealer.

Goethe then asked me about the *Theory of Colours*, and whether I had thought any more of his proposal to write a compendium. I told him how the matter stood, and we fell unadvisedly into a difference of opinion; which I will describe, on account of the importance of the subject.

On a clear winter's day, and in the sunlight, the shadows cast upon the snow frequently appear blue. This is classed by Goethe, in his *Theory of Colours*, under the subjective phenomena: for he assumes as a principle that the sunlight comes down to us—who do not live on high mountain-tops—not perfectly white; but, penetrating through an atmosphere more or less misty, yellowish: so that the snow, when the sun shines upon it, is not perfectly white, but tinged with yellow, which charms the eye to opposition production of blue. The blue shadow is, according to this view, a *demanded colour*.[1] Goethe then very consistently explains the observations made by Saussure on Mont Blanc.

When of late I again looked over the first chapters of the *Theory of Colours*, to try whether I could write a compendium, I found that Goethe's inference was founded on error. I will explain.

The windows of my apartment look due south upon a garden, bounded by a building which in winter casts towards me a shadow long enough to cover half the garden. I looked upon this broad shadow on the snow some days ago, while the sky was quite blue and the sun bright, and was astonished to see the whole surface perfectly blue. "This," said I, "cannot be a 'demanded colour'; for my eye is not brought into contact with any surface of snow illumined by the sun so that the required contrast could be produced." However, to be quite certain, and to prevent the dazzling light of the neighbouring houses from affecting my eye, I rolled up a sheet of paper, and looked through it on the shaded surface, when I found that the blue remained unaltered. That this blue shadow could be nothing subjective was now established in my mind beyond a doubt.

I looked once more; and, behold, the riddle was solved! "What can it be," said I, "but the reflection of the blue sky, which is brought down by the shade, and has an inclination to settle there? For it is written—Colour is akin to shade, readily combines with it, and readily appears to us in it."

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[1] "Geforderte Farbe," that is to say, a colour called forth by the eye itself, according to Goethe's peculiar theory, as explained above.—J. O.

The following days gave me opportunity to confirm my hypothesis. I walked about the fields; there was no blue sky, the sun shone through foggy mists, and spread a perfectly yellow light over the snow. It was strong enough to cast a decided shadow; and in this case, according to Goethe's doctrine, the brightest blue should have been produced. However, there was no blue; the shadows remained grey.

On the following forenoon, when the atmosphere was cloudy, the sun peeped out from time to time, and cast decided shadows upon the snow. Again, they were not blue, but grey. In both cases the reflection of the blue sky was wanting to give the shadow its colour.

I was thus sufficiently convinced that Goethe's deduction of this natural phenomenon was proved to be fallacious, and that the paragraphs in the *Theory of Colours* that treated of this subject were much in need of modification.

Something similar occurred to me with the coloured double shadows seen to advantage by taperlight at break of day or at the beginning of evening twilight, as well as by a clear moonlight. That one of the shadows, the yellow one shone upon by the taperlight, is objective and belongs to the doctrine of dense media, Goethe has not expressly said, although such is the case; the other, the bluish or bluish-green shadow, shone upon by the purest light of day or moon, he declares to be subjective—a "demanded colour," produced in the eye by the yellow light of the taper diffused over the white paper.

Now, on a careful observation, I did not find this doctrine thoroughly confirmed. On the contrary, it appeared that the weak daylight or moonlight, acting from without, already brought with it a bluish tone; which is strengthened partly by the shadow, partly by the "demanding" (*fordernd*) yellow light of the taper—and that therefore we have an objective foundation here also.

That the dawning day and the moon cast a pale light is well known. A countenance seen at break of day, or by moonlight, appears pale. Shakespeare seems to have been aware of this; for in that remarkable passage where Romeo leaves his beloved at daybreak, and he and Juliet suddenly appear so pale to each other, the observation of it must have served as a foundation. The operation of this light in producing paleness would of itself be a sufficient indication that it must bring with it a greenish or bluish tinge, since it has precisely the same effect as a mirror of bluish or greenish glass. The following may serve as a further confirmation:

Light, as seen by the mind's eye, may be conceived as completely white; but the empirical light, as perceived by the corporeal eye, is seldom seen in such purity. It has a tendency to take either the *plus* or the *minus* side, and to appear either yellowish or bluish. Direct sunlight, as well as taperlight, inclines decidedly to the plus side—the yellowish; but the light of the moon, as well as that of dawn and evening twilight, neither of which is direct, but only reflected, and which are further modified by twilight and night, incline to the minus side, and have a bluish tone.

Place a sheet of white paper in the twilight or moonlight, so that one-half of it may be shone upon by the light of day or moon, and the other by the taperlight; then one-half will have a bluish, the other a yellowish tone; and both lights, without any addition of shade, or any subjective heightening, will have already ranged themselves on the active or the passive side.

The result of my observations, therefore, was, that even Goethe's doctrine of the coloured double-shadow was not thoroughly correct; that in the production of this phenomenon there was more of the objective than he had observed, and that the law of subjective "demand" (*Forderung*) could be but secondary.

If the human eye were so sensitive that at the slightest contact of one colour it had an immediate tendency to produce the opposite, it would be constantly transferring one colour into another, so that the most unpleasant mixture would arise. Fortunately, however, a healthy eye is so organized that it either does not observe the "demanded" colours, or, if its attention is directed towards them, produces them with difficulty; indeed this operation requires some practice and dexterity before it can succeed even in favourable circumstances. What is really characteristic in such subjective phenomena, viz. that the eye to a certain extent requires a strong incitement to produce them, and that when they are produced they have no permanence, has been too little regarded by Goethe, both in the case of the blue shadow in the snow, and in that of the coloured double-shadow; for in both cases the surface in question has a scarcely perceptible tinge, and in both cases the "demanded" colour appears decidedly marked at the very first glance.

But Goethe, with his adherence to a law he had once recognized, and with his maxim of applying it even in cases where it seems concealed, could easily be tempted to extend a synthesis too far and to discern a favourite law even in cases where a totally different influence is at work.

When to-day he spoke of his *Theory of Colours*, and asked how the proposed compendium was going on, I would willingly have passed over my new discoveries in silence, for I felt in some perplexity as to how I should tell him the truth without offending him. Nevertheless, as I was really in earnest with respect to the compendium, it was necessary to remove all errors and to rectify all misunderstandings. All that I could do was to make the frank confession that, after careful observation, I found myself compelled to differ with him in some points; as I found that neither his deduction of the blue shadow in the snow, nor his doctrine of the coloured double-shadow, was completely confirmed.

I communicated to him my thoughts and observations; but, as I have not the gift of describing objects clearly by word of mouth, I confined myself to a statement of the results of my observation, without going into a more minute explanation of details, intending to do this in writing.

However, I had scarcely opened my mouth, when Goethe's sublimely-serene countenance became clouded over, and I saw but too clearly that he did not approve of my objections.

"Truly," said I, "he who would get the better of your excellency must rise early in the morning; but yet it is possible that the wise may go too far, and the foolish find the spoil."

"As if, forsooth, you had found it," returned Goethe, with an ironical laugh; "with your idea of coloured light you belong to the fourteenth century, and with all the rest you are in the very abyss of dialectics. The only thing good about you is that you are, at any rate, honest enough to speak out plainly what you think.

"My Theory of Colours," he continued, "fares just the same as the Christian religion. It seems for a while as if there were faithful disciples; but very soon they fall off and form a new sect. You are a heretic like the rest, for you are not the first that has apostatized. I have fallen out with the most excellent men about contested points in the Theory of Colours, viz. with —— about ——, and with —— about ——." Here he mentioned some names of eminence.

We had now finished eating; conversation came to a standstill, and Goethe rose and placed himself against the window. I went up to him and pressed his hand; for I loved him in spite of his taunts, and I felt moreover that I was right, and that he was the suffering party.

Before long, we were again talking and joking about indifferent subjects; but when I went to him, and told him that he should have my objections in writing for a closer examination, and that the only reason he did not agree with me lay in the clumsiness of my verbal statement, he could not help, with a half-laugh and half-sneer, throwing in my teeth at the very doorway something about heretics and heresy.

If it should appear strange that Goethe could not readily bear contradiction with respect to his Theory of Colours, while with respect to his poetical works he always showed himself perfectly easy and heard every well-founded objection with thanks, we may perhaps solve the riddle by reflecting that as a poet he received the most perfect satisfaction from without; while, by the *Theory of Colours*, the greatest and most difficult of his works, he had gained nothing but censure and disapproval. During half a life he had been annoyed by the most senseless opposition on every side, and it was natural enough that he should always find himself in a sort of irritable polemic position, and be always fully armed for a passionate conflict.

His feeling for the Theory of Colours was like that of a mother who all the more loves an excellent child the less it is esteemed by others.

"As for what I have done as a poet," he would repeatedly say to me, "I take no pride whatever in it. Excellent poets have lived at the same time with myself; poets more excellent have lived before me, and others will come after me. But that in my century I am the only person who knows the truth in the difficult science of colours—of that, I say, I am not a little proud, and here I have a consciousness of a superiority to many."

Friday, February 20, 1829.

Dined with Goethe. He is pleased at having finished the *Wanderjahre*, which he will send off to-morrow. In the Theory of Colours he is coming over a little to my opinion concerning the blue shadow in the snow. He talked of his "Italian journey," which he had again taken under consideration.

"It is with us as with wives," said he: "when they are brought to bed they for ever renounce sleeping with men; and then, before you know where you are, they are in the family-way again!"

He then talked about the fourth volume of his *Life*, and the way he would treat it; saying that my notes on the year 1824, concerning what he had already executed and planned, would be highly useful.

He read aloud Göttling's journal, which treats of the former fencing-masters at Jena in a very kindly spirit. Goethe speaks very well of Göttling.

Monday, March 23, 1829.

"I have found a paper of mine among some others," said Goethe to-day, "in which I call architecture 'petrified music.'[1] Really there is something in this; the tone of mind produced by architecture approaches the effect of music.

"Splendid edifices and apartments are for princes and kingdoms. Those who live in them feel at ease and contented, and desire nothing further.

"To me this is quite repugnant. In a splendid abode like that which I had at Carlsbad, I am instantly lazy and inactive. On the contrary, a small residence, like this poor apartment, where a sort of disorderly order—a sort of gipsy fashion—prevails, suits me exactly. It allows my inner nature full liberty to act, and to create from itself alone."

We talked of Schiller's letters, the life he and Goethe had led together, and how the two had daily incited each other to activity.

"Even in *Faust*," said I, "Schiller seems to have taken great interest; it is pleasant to see how he urges you, or allows himself to be misled by his idea of continuing *Faust* himself. I see by this that there was something precipitate in him."

"You are right," said Goethe, "he was like all men who proceed too much from the idea. Then he was never in repose, and could never have done; as you may see by his letters on *Wilhelm Meister*, which he would have now this way, and now that way. I had enough to do to stand my ground, and keep his works and mine free from such influences."

"I have," said I, "been reading this morning his *Indian Death Dirge*, and have been delighted with its excellence."

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[1] Schelling, in *Philosophie der Kunst*, calls architecture "frozen music." It seems uncertain which "said it first."

"You see," said Goethe, "what a great artist Schiller was, and how he could manage even the objective when brought traditionally before his eyes. That Indian Death Song is certainly one of his very best poems, and I only wish he had made a dozen like it. And yet—can you believe it!—his nearest friends found fault with this poem, thinking it was not sufficiently tinctured with his ideality. Yes, my good fellow, such things one has to suffer from one's friends. Humboldt[1] found fault with my Dorothea, because, when assailed by the soldiers, she took up arms and fought. And yet, without that trait, the character of the extraordinary girl, so adapted to the time and circumstances, is at once destroyed, and she sinks into commonplace. But the longer you live, the more you will see how few men are capable of appreciating what *must* be, and how on the contrary they only praise and would only have what is suitable to themselves. These of whom I spoke were the first and best; so you may judge what was the opinion of the multitude, and how in fact I always stood alone.

"Had I not had some solid foundation in the plastic arts and natural science, I should scarce have kept myself up in that evil time and its daily influences; but this was my protection, and enabled me to aid Schiller also."

Tuesday, March 24, 1829.

"The higher a man is," said Goethe, "the more he is under the influence of dæmons, and he must take heed lest his guiding will counsel him to a wrong path.

"There was altogether something dæmonic in my acquaintance with Schiller; we might have been brought together earlier or later; but that we met just at the time when I had finished my Italian journey, and Schiller began to be weary of philosophical speculation—this led to very important consequences for us both."

Thursday, April 2, 1829.

"I will discover to you," said Goethe to-day at dinner, "a political secret, which will sooner or later be made public. Capo d'Istria cannot long continue to be at the head of Grecian affairs, for he wants one quality indispensable for such a position; *he is no soldier*. There is no instance of a mere cabinet statesman being able to organize a revolutionary state, and to bring the military and their leaders under his control. With the sabre in his hand, at the head of an army, a man may command and give laws, secure of being obeyed; but without this the attempt is hazardous. Napoleon, if he had not been a soldier, could never have attained the highest power; and Capo d'Istria will not long keep the first place, but will very soon play a secondary part. I tell you this beforehand, and you will see it come. It lies in the nature of things, and must happen."

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[1] Wilhelm von Humboldt.—J. O.

Goethe then talked much about the French, especially Cousin, Villemain, and Guizot.

"These men," said he, "look into, through, and round[1] a subject, with great success. They combine perfect knowledge of the past with the spirit of the nineteenth century; and the result is wonderful."

We then came to the newest French poets, and the meaning of the terms "classic" and "romantic."

"A new expression occurs to me," said Goethe, "which does not ill define the state of the case. I call the classic *healthy*, the romantic *sickly*. In this sense, the *Nibelungenlied* is as classic as the Iliad, for both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are romantic—not because they are new; but because they are weak, morbid, and sickly. And the antique is classic—not because it is old; but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy. If we distinguish 'classic' and 'romantic' by these qualities, it will be easy to see our way."

The conversation turned upon the imprisonment of Béranger.

"He is rightly served," said Goethe. "His late poems are really contrary to all order; and he has fully deserved punishment by his offences against king, state, and peaceful citizenship. His early poems, on the contrary, are cheerful and harmless, and are well adapted to make a circle of gay and happy people; which, indeed, is the best that can be said of songs."

"I am sure," said I, "he has been injured by the society he lives in, and, to please his revolutionary friends, has said many things he otherwise would not have said. Your excellency should fulfil your intention of writing a chapter on influences; the subject is the richer and more important the more it is thought of."

"It is only too rich," said Goethe; "for in truth all is influence except ourselves."

"We have only to see," said I, "whether an influence is injurious or beneficial—whether it is suitable or repugnant to our nature."

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[1] This felicitous rendering of "Einsicht, Umsicht, und Durchsicht," is by Mrs. Fuller.—J. O.

"That is indeed the point," said Goethe, "but the difficulty is for our better nature to maintain itself vigorously, and not to allow the dæmons more power than is due."

At dessert, Goethe had a laurel, in full flower, and a Japanese plant, placed before us on the table. I remarked what different feelings were excited by the two plants—that the sight of the laurel produced a cheerful, light, mild, and tranquil mood; but that of the Japanese plant, one of barbaric melancholy.

"You are not wrong," said Goethe; "and hence great influence over the inhabitants of a country has been conceded to its vegetation. And surely, he who passes his life surrounded by solemn lofty oaks must be a different man from him who lives among airy birches. Still we must remember that men in general have not such sensitive natures as we, but vigorously pursue their own course of life without allowing so much power to external impressions. Nevertheless, this much is certain: not only the inborn peculiarities of a race, but also soil and climate, aliment and occupation, combine to form the character of a people. Moreover the primitive races mostly took possession of a soil that pleased them; where, consequently, the country was already in harmony with their own inborn character.

"Just look round," continued Goethe; "behind you on the desk there is a paper I wish you to look at."

"This blue envelope?" said I.

"Yes," said he. "Now, what do you say to the handwriting? Is it not that of a man who felt himself noble and free, as he wrote the address? Whose do you think it is?"

I was attracted by the paper. The hand was indeed free and imposing. "Merck might have written so," said I.

"No," said Goethe; "he was not noble and positive enough. It is from Zelter. Pen and paper were favourable to him in the case of this envelope; so that the writing perfectly expresses his great character. I shall put the paper into my collection of autographs."

Friday, April 3, 1829.

Dined with Coudray at Goethe's. Coudray gave an account of a staircase in the grand-ducal palace at Belvedere, found inconvenient for many years, which the old master had always despaired of improving, and which had now been completely rectified under the young prince.

Coudray also gave an account of the progress of several highways, saying the road over the mountains had to be taken round a little on account of a rise of two feet to the rood (*Ruthe*), while in some places there were eighteen inches to the rood.

I asked Coudray how many inches constituted the proper standard for road-making in hilly districts. "Ten inches to the rood," said he, "is a convenient measure." "But," said I, "when we go from Weimar along any road—east, south, west, or north—we find some places where the highway has a rise of far more than ten inches to the rood." "Those are short unimportant distances," replied Coudray; "and in road-making we often pass over such spots in the vicinity of a place, that we may not deprive it of its little income from relays." We laughed at this honest fraud. "And in fact," continued Coudray, "it is a mere trifle; the carriages get easily over the ground, and the passengers are for once inured to a little hardship. Besides, as the relays are usually put on at inns, the drivers have an opportunity of taking something to drink, and they would not thank anyone for spoiling their sport."

"I should like to know," said Goethe, "whether in perfectly flat countries it would not be better to interrupt the straight line of road, so as to allow it to rise and fall a little. This would not prevent comfortable travelling; and there would be this advantage, that the road would be always kept dry by the draining."

"That might be done," replied Coudray, "and would probably be very useful."

Coudray then produced a paper—the scheme of instructions for a young architect whom the Upper Building Board (*Ober-Baubehörde*) was about to send to Paris to complete his education. He read the instructions, of which Goethe approved. Goethe had obtained the necessary assistance from the minister; we were pleased at the success of the affair, and talked of the precautions to be adopted that the money might be really of use to the young man and last him a year. The intention was, on his return, to place him as a teacher at the industrial school to be established; by which means the clever young man would at once have a suitable sphere of action.

Plans and studies for carpenters, drawn by Schindel, were then produced and looked over. Coudray considered them of importance, and perfectly fitted for the use of the industrial school.

There was then some talk about buildings: the means of avoiding echo, and the great firmness of the edifices belonging to the Jesuits. "At Messina," said Goethe, "all the buildings were thrown down by an earthquake except the church and convent of the Jesuits; which stood unharmed, as if they had been built the day before. There was no sign that the earthquake had had the slightest effect upon them."

From the Jesuits and their wealth, conversation turned upon the Catholics and Irish emancipation. "Emancipation will, we see, be granted," said Coudray, "but Parliament will so fence it round with clauses that it cannot in any way be dangerous to England."

"All preventive measures," said Goethe, "are ineffectual with Catholics. The Papal See has interests of which we never dream, and means to carry them out quietly. If I were a member of Parliament, I would not hinder emancipation; but I would have it added to the protocol, that when the first distinguished Protestant head fell by a Catholic vote, people should think of me."

Conversation then turned on the newest French literature; and Goethe spoke again with admiration of the lectures of MM. Cousin, Villemain, and Guizot.

"Instead of the superficial lightness of Voltaire," said he, "they have an erudition such as in earlier days was unknown out of Germany. And such intellect! such searching and pressing out of the subject! superb! It is as if they trod the wine-press. All three are excellent, but I would give the preference to Guizot; he is my favourite."

Speaking on topics of universal history, Goethe spoke thus on the subject of rulers:

"To be popular, a great ruler needs only his greatness. If he has striven and succeeded in making his realm happy at home and honoured abroad, it matters not whether he ride about in a state coach, dressed in all his orders, or in a bearskin, with his cigar in his mouth, in a miserable droshky—he is sure of love and esteem from his people.

"But if a prince lacks personal greatness, and does not know how to conciliate his subjects by good deeds, he must think of other means; and there is none better and more effective than religion, and a sympathy with the customs of his people. To appear at church every Sunday; to look down upon, and let himself be looked at for an hour by, the congregation—is the best means of becoming popular which can be recommended to a young sovereign; and one which, with all his greatness, Napoleon himself did not disdain."

Conversation again turned upon the Catholics, and it was remarked how great were the silent operation and influence of the ecclesiastics. An anecdote was related of a young writer of Henault, who had made somewhat merry with the rosary in a periodical he edited. The paper was immediately bought up through the influence of the priests over their several congregations.

"An Italian translation of my *Werther*," said Goethe, "very soon appeared at Milan. Not a single copy of it was to be seen a short time afterwards. The bishop had caused the whole edition to be bought up by the clergy in the various districts. I was not vexed, but pleased with the shrewd gentlemen, who saw at once that *Werther* was a bad book for the Catholics; and I could not but commend him for at once taking the most effective measures to suppress it quietly."

Sunday, April 5, 1829.

Goethe said he had driven out to Belvedere this morning to look at Coudray's new staircase in the castle, which he found excellent. He also told me a great petrified log, which he would show me, had been sent him.

"Such petrified trunks," said he, "are found about the fifty-first degree round about the earth, as far as America, like a girdle. We must always go on wondering. We have no idea whatever of the early organization of the earth, and I cannot blame Herr von Buch for trying to *indoctrinate* mankind for the sake of spreading his hypothesis. He knows nothing, but nobody knows more; and, after all, it does not matter what is taught if it has only some show of reason."

Goethe told me that Zelter desired to be remembered to me, at which I was greatly pleased. We then talked of his *Travels in Italy*; and he told me that in one of his letters from that country he had found a song he would show me. He looked out the poem, and read:

"Cupid, thou wanton, thou self-will'd boy," etc. [1]

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[1] "Cupido, loser, eigensinniger Knabe." The poem in its complete form will be found in the letters relaitng to the *Second Stay at Rome* (Zweyter Römischer Aufenthalt), under the head of "January 1788."—J. O.

This poem seemed to me perfectly new.

"It cannot be strange to you," said Goethe, "for it is in *Claudine von Villa Bella*, where it is sung by Rugantino. I have, however, given it there in such a fragmentary state that it is passed over without its meaning being observed. I think, however, it stands well. It prettily expresses the situation, and is in the anacreontic vein. This song, and others of the kind from my operas, should properly be reprinted among my *Poems*, that the composer may have them all together."

Goethe had read the poem very beautifully. I could not get it out of my head, and it seemed to have made a lasting impression upon him also. The last lines:

> So rude thy sport, I fear my poor little soul will
> Haste away to escape thee, and flee her dwelling,

he uttered from time to time, as if in a dream.

He then told me of a book about Napoleon lately published, written by one who had known the hero in his youth, and containing the most remarkable disclosures. "The book is very dry," said he, "written without any enthusiasm; but it shows how grand truth is when anybody dares to speak it."

Goethe also told me about a tragedy by a young poet. "It is a pathological work," said he; "a superfluity of sap is bestowed on some parts that do not require it, and drawn out of those standing in need of it. The subject was good, but the scenes I expected were not there; while others that I did not expect were elaborated with assiduity and love. This is what I call pathological, or even 'romantic'—if you would rather speak after our new theory."

We remained together a little longer very cheerfully, and at last Goethe gave me some honey—also some dates, which I took with me.

Monday, April 6, 1829.

Goethe gave me a letter from Egon Ebert, which I read at dinner, and which highly pleased me. We said a great deal in praise of Egon Ebert and Bohemia, and also mentioned Professor Zauper with affection.

"Bohemia is a strange country," said Goethe. "I have always liked to be there. In the culture of the *literati* there is still something pure—which begins to be rare in the north of Germany; since here every vagabond, with whom moral basis or higher views are not to be thought of, writes."

Goethe then spoke of Ebert's newest epic poem, of the early female government in Bohemia, and of the origin of the tradition of the Amazons. This brought conversation to the epic of another poet, who had taken great pains to get favourable notices of his work in the public prints.

"Such notices," said Goethe, "have appeared in various papers. But at last comes the *Halle Literary Gazette*, telling plainly what the poem is really worth, and thus all the compliments of the other papers are nullified. He who nowadays will not have the truth, is discovered; the time for deluding and misleading the public is past."

"I wonder," said I, "that man can toil so for a little fame, and even stoop to falsities."

"Dear child!" said Goethe, "a name is no despicable matter. Napoleon, for the sake of a great name, broke in pieces almost half a world."

After a short pause, Goethe told me more of the new book about Napoleon, adding:

"The power of truth is great. Every halo, every illusion which journalists, historians, and poets have conjured up about Napoleon, vanishes before the terrible reality of this book; but the hero becomes no less than before—on the contrary, he grows in stature as he increases in truth."

"His personal influence," said I, "must have had a peculiar magic, that men should so attach themselves to him at once, adhere to him, and suffer themselves to be wholly governed by him."

"Certainly," said Goethe, "his personal influence was immense. Yet the chief reason was that men under him were sure of attaining their object. On this account they were drawn towards him, as they are to everyone who gives them a like certainty. Thus actors attach themselves to a new manager, who they think will assign them good parts. This is an old story constantly repeated; so is human nature constituted. No man serves another disinterestedly, but he does it willingly if he knows he can thus serve himself. Napoleon knew men well; he knew how to make use of their weaknesses."

The conversation turned upon Zelter.

"You know," said Goethe, "that Zelter received the Prussian Order. But he had no coat of arms; while, from his large family, he might hope for a long continuance of his name. A coat of arms was therefore necessary as an honourable basis, and I have taken the fancy to make him one. I wrote to him;

and he was pleased, but insisted on having a horse. 'Good,' said I, 'a horse you shall have, but it shall be one with wings.' But turn your head; a paper lies behind you; there I have made the sketch with pencil."

I took up the paper, and examined the drawing. The arms looked very stately, and I could not but praise the invention. In the lower field were the battlements of a city wall, intimating that Zelter had been in early days a skilful mason. A winged horse rose from behind, indicating his genius and high aspirations. Above the escutcheon was a lyre, over which shone a star; as a symbol of the art by which our excellent friend, under the influence and protection of favouring stars, had won his fame. Beneath was annexed the Order his king had bestowed upon him in recognition of his great merits.

"I have had it engraved by Facius," said Goethe, "and you shall see an impression. Is it not pleasant for one friend to make a coat of arms for another, and thus, as it were, bestow nobility upon him?"

We sat a while longer at table, taking some glasses of old Rhenish wine, with some good biscuits. Goethe hummed to himself unintelligibly. The poem of yesterday came into my head again. I recited the lines:

My goods and chattels hast thou knock'd about sadly;
I seek, and only seem to wander in blindness.

"I cannot get that poem out of my head," said I. "It is unique, and most admirably expresses the disorder love occasions in our life."

"It brings a gloomy condition before our eyes," said Goethe.

"On me," said I, "it makes the impression of a Dutch picture."

"There is something in it of the *Good man and good wife,*" said Goethe.

"You have just anticipated me; for I have been forced to keep on thinking of that Scottish subject, and Ostade's picture was before my eyes."

"Yet, strange to say," observed Goethe, "neither of these two poems could be painted; they convey the impression of a picture—they produce a similar mood; but, once painted, they would be nothing."

"It is poetry verging as nearly as possible on painting. Such poems are my favourites; they inspire both contemplation and feeling. But the poem is as if from another time and another world."

"I shall not write such another," said Goethe; "and know not how it came to me, as is often the way."

"One peculiarity is, that it has the effect of rhyme, and yet it is not in rhyme. How is this?"

"That is the result of the rhythm," he replied. "The lines begin with a short syllable, and then proceed in trochees till the dactyl near the close; which has a peculiar effect, and gives a sad, bewailing character to the poem."

He took a pencil, and divided the line:

Vŏn | mēinĕm | brēitĕn | Lāgĕr | bīn ĭch vĕr | trīebĕn.

We then talked of rhythm in general, and came to the conclusion that no certain rules can be laid down.

"The measure," said Goethe, "flows unconsciously from the mood of the poet. If he thought about it while writing the poem, he would go mad and produce nothing of value."

I was waiting for the impression of the seal.[1] Goethe began to speak of Guizot.

"I am going on with his lectures, which continue excellent. Those of the present year go about as far as the eighth century. I know no historian more profound or more penetrating. Things of which nobody thinks have the greatest meaning for him, as sources of important events. For instance, what influence certain religious opinions have had upon history—how the doctrine of original sin, grace, and good works, has given this or that form to certain epochs—is deduced most clearly. Then the enduring life of Roman law (which, like a diving-duck, hides itself at times; but is never quite lost, always coming up again alive) is well set forth; on which occasion full acknowledgment is due to our excellent Savigny.

"Where Guizot speaks of the influence other nations exercised on the Gauls, I was particularly struck by this:

"'The Germans,' says he, 'brought us the idea of personal freedom, which was possessed by that nation more than any other.'

"Is he not perfectly right? and does not this idea work upon us even to the present day? The Reformation is as much attributable to this source as the *Burschen* conspiracy on the Wartburg—wise as well as foolish enterprises. Even the motley character of our literature; the thirst of our poets for originality—the belief of each that he must strike out a new path; the isolation among our learned men, each one working from a point of his own—all comes from this source.

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[1] Of Zelter's coat of arms.

"The French and English, on the other hand, keep far more together, and guide themselves one by another. They harmonize in dress and manners. They fear to differ from one another, lest they should be remarkable, or even ridiculous. But with the Germans each one goes his own way, and strives to satisfy himself; he does not ask about others, for, as Guizot rightly observes, he has within him the idea of personal freedom—from which comes much excellence, but also much absurdity."

Tuesday, April 7, 1829.

As I entered, I found Hofrath Meyer, who had been ill of late, sitting with Goethe at table; I was rejoiced to see him so much better. They spoke of art—of Peel, who has given four thousand pounds for a Claude Lorraine, and has thus found especial favour in the eyes of Meyer.

The newspapers were brought in, and we looked over them while waiting for the soup. The emancipation of the Irish was now discussed.

"It is instructive," said Goethe, "to see how things of which nobody ever thought and which would never have been spoken of but for the present crisis, come to light on this occasion. Though we cannot get a clear notion of the state of Ireland (the subject is too intricate), this we can see: she suffers from evils that will not be removed by any means—not by emancipation. If it has hitherto been unfortunate for Ireland to endure her evils alone, it is now unfortunate that England is also drawn into them. Then, no confidence can be put in the Catholics. We see with what difficulty the two million Protestants in Ireland have kept their ground hitherto against the preponderating five million Catholics; how for instance the poor Protestant farmers have been oppressed, tricked, and tormented, when among Catholic neighbours. The Catholics do not agree among themselves, but they always unite against a Protestant. They are like a pack of hounds; which bite one another, but, when a stag comes in view, all unite immediately to run it down."

From Ireland conversation turned to the affairs of Turkey. Surprise was expressed that the Russians, with their preponderating power, did not effect more in the late campaign.

"The fact is," said Goethe, "the means were inadequate, and therefore over-great requisitions were made upon individuals; this produced great personal deeds and sacrifices, without advancing the cause on the whole."

"It may be a cursed spot," said Meyer. "We see, in the earliest times, that, in this region, if an enemy attempted to penetrate anywhere from the Danube to the northern mountains, he always encountered obstinate resistance, and almost invariably failed. If the Russians could only keep the sea-side open, to furnish themselves with stores in that way!"

"That is yet to be hoped," said Goethe; "I am now reading Napoleon's campaign in Egypt—what is related by the hero's everyday companion Bourrienne, which destroys the romantic cast of many scenes and displays facts in their naked sublime truth. It is evident that he undertook this expedition merely to fill up an epoch when he could do nothing in France to make himself ruler. He was at first undecided what to do; he visited all the French harbours on the Atlantic coast, to inspect the fleets and to see whether an expedition against England were practicable. He found it was not, and then decided on going to Egypt."

"It raises my admiration," said I, "that Napoleon, at that early age, could play with the great affairs of the world as easily and securely as if he had had many years' practice and experience."

"That, dear child," said Goethe, "is an inborn quality with great talents. Napoleon managed the world as Hummel his piano; both achievements appear wonderful, we do not understand one more than the other: so it is, and the whole is done before our eyes. Napoleon was especially great in that he was at all hours the same. Before a battle, during a battle, after a victory, after a defeat: he stood always firm, was always clear and decided. He was equal to each situation and each moment; just as it is all alike to Hummel whether he plays an *adagio* or an *allegro*, bass or treble. This facility we find everywhere where there is real talent: in the arts of peace as well as in war; at the harpsichord as behind the cannon.

"We see, by this book," continued Goethe, "how many fables have been invented about the Egyptian campaign. Much, indeed, is corroborated; but much is not, and most that has been said is contradicted. That he had eight hundred Turkish prisoners shot is true; but the act appears as the mature determination of a long council of war, on the conviction, after a consideration of all the circumstances, that there was no means of saving them. That he descended into the Pyramids is a fable: he stood at his ease on the outside, and let others tell him what they had seen below. In the same way, the tradition that he wore the Eastern dress is inaccurate: he put it on once at home, and appeared in it among his followers to see how it became him; but the turban does not suit such long heads, and he never put on the dress again.

"He really visited those sick of the plague; to prove that he who could vanquish fear could vanquish the plague also. And he was right! I can instance a fact from my own life, when I was inevitably exposed to infection from a putrid fever, and warded off the disease merely by force of will. It is incredible what power the moral will has in such cases. It penetrates the body, and puts it into a state of activity that repels hurtful influences. Fear, on the other hand, is a state of indolent weakness and susceptibility, which makes it easy for every foe to take possession. This Napoleon knew well, and he felt that he risked nothing in giving his army an imposing example.

"But," continued Goethe, gaily, "pay your respects. What book do you think Napoleon carried in his field library?—my *Werther* !"

"We may see by his levee at Erfurt," said I, "that he had studied it well."

"He had studied it as a criminal judge does his documents," said Goethe, "and in this spirit talked with me about it. In Bourrienne's work there is a list of the books Napoleon took to Egypt, among which is *Werther*. But what is worth noticing in this list is the way the books are classed under different rubrics. Under the head *Politique*, for instance, we find the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Koran; by which we see from what point of view Napoleon regarded religious matters."

He told us many other interesting matters from the book: item, how Napoleon with his army went through part of the dry bed in the narrow part of the Red Sea, at the time of ebb; but was overtaken by the flood, and the last men waded up to their arms in water, so that the exploit nearly ended in Pharaoh's style. This led Goethe to say much that was new on the rise of the flood. He compared it with that of the clouds, which do not come from a great distance, but arise at once in various parts and pass along uniformly everywhere.

Wednesday, April 8, 1829.

Goethe was already at table when I entered.

"Whence, think you," said he, "have I had a letter?—From Rome. But from whom?—From the King of Bavaria."

"I sympathize in your pleasure," said I. "And is it not odd? Not an hour since, and during my walk, I had been thinking about the King of Bavaria."

"We have often internal intimations of that sort. There is the letter; sit down by me, and read it."

I took the letter, Goethe took the newspaper; and so, undisturbed, I read the royal words. The letter was dated Rome, 26th March, 1829, and was written in a very legible and dignified hand. The King told Goethe that he had bought an estate in Rome, the Villa di Malta, with the adjacent gardens in the neighbourhood of the Villa Ludovisi, at the north-west end of the city. It stands upon a hill, so that he can see over all Rome, and has towards the north-east a full view of St. Peter's.

"It is a prospect," he writes, "worth travelling a long way to enjoy, which I have at my command every hour, from the windows of my own house."

He goes on congratulating himself at being so pleasantly settled at Rome. "I had not seen Rome for twelve years," he writes, "and longed for it as for a mistress; from now on, however, I shall return with tranquil feelings, as to a beloved female friend." He then speaks of the sublime edifices and works of art with the enthusiasm of a connoisseur, keenly sensitive to any departure from good taste. The letter altogether was in a beautiful and thoroughly human vein, not like what is expected from persons of such high rank.

"There," said Goethe, "you see a monarch who retains both his royal majesty and his inborn fine human nature. A rare phenomenon, and the more delightful."

I looked again at the letter. "Here in Rome," writes the King, "I refresh myself from the cares of a throne; Art and Nature are my daily enjoyments—artists my table companions." He also writes how he passed the house where Goethe resided, and how he thought of him at the time. Some passages are cited from the *Roman Elegies*[1]; so it may be seen the King keeps them fresh in his memory and likes to read them at Rome from time to time on the spot where they were produced.

"Yes," said Goethe, "he is particularly fond of those elegies. He has teased me a great deal to tell him how far they are matter of fact; the effect of the poems being so pleasant that it seems as if there must have been really some truth in them. People seldom reflect that a poet can generally make something good out of very little.

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[1] i.e. Goethe's—J. O.

"I wish I had the King's poems by me, that I might allude to them in my answer. I should think they were good, to judge from the little I have read. In form and treatment he has much of Schiller; and, if he has put the substance of a lofty soul into so fine a vase, we should expect much excellence. I am glad the King is so pleasantly settled at Rome. I know the villa—the situation is beautiful, and all the German artists reside in the vicinity."

The servant changed the plates, and Goethe bade him spread out the large engraving of Rome on the floor of the "covered chamber." "I will show you on what a beautiful spot the King has settled, that you may have a right notion of the place."

"Yesterday evening," said I, "I read *Claudine von Villa Bella*, and was delighted with it. The foundation is so well laid, and it is carried out with such joyous audacity, that I strongly desire to see it on the stage."

"If it is well played the effect is not bad."

"I have already cast the piece in my mind," said I, "and distributed the parts. Herr Genast must be Rugantino; he seems actually made for the part. Herr Franke must be Don Pedro; for he is similarly shaped, and it is good for two brothers to be somewhat alike. Basco should be Herr La Roche; who, with his excellent art and making-up, would give the part the required wildness."

"Madame Eberwein," continued Goethe, "would make a very good Lucinde, and Mademoiselle Schmidt would be Claudine."

"For Alonzo," said I, "we ought to have a stately figure—rather a good actor than a singer, and I think Herr Oels or Herr Graff would be well placed. But by whom is the opera composed, and what is the music like?"

"By Reichardt, and it is excellent; only, the instrumentation is a little weak, owing to the taste of the time. Something should now be done to make the instrumentation stronger and fuller. With our song, *Cupido loser, eigensinniger Knabe*, the composer has been particularly happy."

"That song," said I, "puts me in a pleasant dreamy mood whenever it is recited."

"From such a mood it proceeded," said Goethe, "so the effect is right."

We had finished eating. Frederick came in and told us that he had laid out the engraving of Rome in the "covered chamber." We went in to look at it. Goethe soon found the Villa Ludovisi, and near it the King's new purchase—the Villa di Malta.

"See," said he, "what a superb situation! The whole city is spread out before you, and the hill is so high that you can see over the buildings towards south and east. I have been in this villa, and often enjoyed the view from the windows. Here, where the city extends out in a point towards the north-east beyond the Tiber, lies St. Peter's; and here, hard by, is the Vatican. The King, you see, has from the windows of his villa a full view of these buildings across the river. The long road here, from the north into the city, comes from Germany; that is the Porta del Popolo. I lived in one of these first streets near the gate, in a corner house. They show another in Rome as the place where I lived; but it is not the right one. No matter: such things are quite indifferent; we must let tradition take its course."

We returned to the dining-room.

"The Chancellor," said I, "would be pleased with that letter from the King."

"He shall see it," said Goethe.

"When I read in the Paris newspaper," he continued, "the speeches and debates of the Chambers, I cannot help thinking of the Chancellor, and how truly he would be in his element there. For such a place it is not enough to have talent: there must be an impulse to speak, and a delight in it; both are united in our Chancellor. Napoleon, too, had this impulse to speak; and when he could not he was forced to write or dictate. We find with Blücher, too, that he liked to speak, and spoke well and with emphasis; he had cultivated this talent in the theatre-box. Our Grand Duke, too, liked to speak, though by nature laconic; when he could not speak, he wrote. He has prepared many laws, many treaties, for the most part well; only, princes have not time or quiet to get knowledge of details. Even in his last days he made an order about paying for the restoration of pictures. A happy instance! for, quite like a prince, he had made a mathematical calculation for paying the expenses of restoration by measure: if the restored picture holds twelve square feet, pay twelve dollars; if four feet, four dollars. This was like a prince, but not like an artist; for a twelve-foot picture may be in such a state that it can be cleaned without much trouble in a day, while a four-foot picture may be in such a condition that the industry and toil of a whole week will scarcely suffice to restore it. But princes, like good military men, are fond of mathematical arrangements."

We then said a great deal about art.

"I possess drawings," said Goethe, "after pictures by Raphael and Domenichino, upon which Meyer made a remarkable observation:

"'The drawings,' said Meyer, 'evince a want of practice; but it is evident that whoever made them had a delicate and just feeling for the pictures before him; and this has passed into the drawing, so as to bring the originals faithfully before the mind. If an artist of our day copied those pictures, he would draw everything far better, and perhaps more correctly; but I venture to say that he would want this true feeling for the original, and that therefore his superior drawing would be far from giving us so pure and perfect a notion of Raphael or Domenichino.'

"Is not that good?" said Goethe. "And the same may be said of translations. Voss, for instance, has certainly made an excellent translation from Homer; yet I am inclined to think a person might have had and conveyed a more naïve and faithful representation of the original, without being on the whole so masterly a translator as Voss."

As the weather was fine, and the sun was already high, we went a little way down the garden, where Goethe had had some trees, which hung too low upon the path, tied up.

The yellow crocuses were in full vigour. We looked upon the flowers and then upon the path, where we had perfectly violet images. "You were lately of opinion," said Goethe, "that green and red mutually called forth each other better than yellow and blue; inasmuch as the former colours stood at a higher degree, and were therefore more perfect, fuller,[1] and more effective, than the latter. I cannot admit this. Every colour, as soon as it is decidedly exhibited to the eye, acts with equal force for the production of the 'demanded colour.' The only point is, that our eye should be in the right mood, that the sunlight should offer no impediment by overbrightness, and that the ground should not be unfavourable to the reception of the 'demanded' image. Generally, we must take care not to make too subtle distinctions and definitions with respect to colours, as we are too easily exposed to the danger of being led from the essential into the non-essential, from the true into the false, and from the simple into the intricate."

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[1] Literally "satiated" (*gesättigt*).—J. O.

I noted down this as a good doctrine for my studies. Meanwhile, the time for the theatre had arrived, and I prepared to set out. "Mind," said Goethe, laughing, as he took leave of me, "that you are able to get over the horrors of *Thirty Years of a Gamester's Life* this evening."

Friday, April 10, 1829.

"While we are waiting for our soup, I will provide you with refreshment for your eyes."

With these words, Goethe placed before me a volume containing landscapes of Claude Lorraine: the first productions of this great master that I had seen. My surprise and rapture rose with every leaf I turned over.

The power of the shadowy masses on either side; the splendid sunlight from the background; and its reflection in the water, producing a clear and decisive impression—struck me as the always-recurring art-maxim of the great master. I was also delighted to find each picture a little world by itself, in which there was nothing not in conformity with, not advancing, the ruling thought. Whether it was a seaport with vessels at anchor, active fishermen and magnificent buildings on the water's edge; or a lonely barren hill-country, with its grazing goats, little brook and bridge, a few low bushes, and a shady tree, under which a reposing shepherd piped; or a marshy spot with standing pools, which in the powerful summer heat gives a pleasant impression of coolness—there was always complete unity in the picture; nowhere anything that did not belong to its element.

"Here you see, for once, a complete man," said Goethe, "who thought and felt beautifully, and in whose mind lay a world such as you will not easily find out of doors. The pictures have the highest truth, but no trace of actuality. Claude Lorraine knew the real world by heart, down to the minutest details, and used it only as a means to express the world of his beautiful soul. That is the true ideality which can so use real means that the truth evolved produces an illusion of actuality."

"This, I think, is good doctrine," said I, "and would apply as well to poetry as to the plastic arts."

"Even so. Meanwhile, you had better defer the further enjoyment of the admirable Claude till after dinner; for the pictures are too good to be looked at too many at once."

"That is my feeling," said I; "for a certain fear comes over me when I am about to turn to the following leaf. We have a similar feeling with an excellent book, when a crowd of good passages compel us to stop, and we loiter a little."

"I have answered the King of Bavaria," said Goethe, after a pause, "and you shall read my letter. Meanwhile, there is in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* a poem to the King, which the Chancellor read to me yesterday and which you must see."

I read the poem to myself.

"Now, what do you say to it?"

"These are," I replied, "the feelings of a dilettante who has more good will than talent; and to whom the high state of literature presents language ready made, which sings and rhymes for him, while he imagines that he himself is speaking."

"You are perfectly right," said he; "I also think it very weak. It bears no trace of external observation; it is wholly mental, and that not in the right way."

"To write a poem well," said I, "requires great knowledge of the subject; and he who has not, like Claude Lorraine, a whole world at command, will seldom produce anything good, with the best ideal tendencies."

"And then," said Goethe, "only an innate talent knows what is really to be done; others go on blundering."

"The æsthetic teachers," said I, "are a proof of this. Scarcely one of them knows what should be taught, hence they complete the perplexity of young poets. Instead of treating of the Real, they treat of the Ideal; and instead of helping the young poet to what he has not, they confuse him about what he has. For instance, he that has by nature wit and humour will use these powers to the best advantage if scarcely conscious of his endowment: but he who allows himself to be influenced by the much-lauded treatises upon these high qualities will be disturbed in the innocent use of his powers; consciousness will paralyse them, and, instead of being aided as he desires, he will find himself balked."

Goethe agreed.

"I have," he continued, "been reading the new epic by Egon Ebert; and you must read it too, that we may help him out a little. He is really a superior talent, but this new poem lacks the proper poetical foundation—reality. The external landscapes, sunset, and sunrise—passages where the external world was his own—could not be better done. But the rest, which lies in ages gone by, and belongs to tradition, is not painted with truth, and lacks the right kernel. The Amazons, with their life and actions, are described in that general way young people esteem poetic and romantic, which usually passes for such in the æsthetic world."

"This fault," said I, "pervades the whole of our present literature. Special truth is avoided, for fear it should not be poetical, and thus we fall into commonplaces."

"Egon Ebert," said Goethe, "should have adhered to the chronicles; he would then have made something of his poem. When I remember how Schiller studied tradition, what trouble he gave himself about Switzerland when he wrote his *Tell*, and how Shakespeare used the chronicles and took into his plays whole passages word for word, I am inclined to prescribe the same course to a young poet of the present day. I have, in *Clavigo*, made use of whole passages from the *Memoirs* of Beaumarchais."

"But they are so worked up," said I, "that the fact is not observed and the passages do not stand out like an indigested mass."

"If it is so," said Goethe, "that is as it should be. Beaumarchais was a mad fellow, and you must read his *Memoirs*. Lawsuits were his element, in which alone he felt truly at home. There are still in existence speeches from one of his lawsuits, which may be ranked among the most remarkable, the most full of talent, and the boldest, of their kind. However, Beaumarchais lost this same famous lawsuit. As he was going down the stairs from the court, he met the Chancellor coming up. Beaumarchais ought to have given place; but he would not, and insisted that each should take half the stair. The Chancellor, insulted in his dignity, commanded his people to push Beaumarchais aside, which they did. Beaumarchais immediately returned into court, and began an action against the Chancellor, which he gained.

"I have now taken up *My Second Residence in Rome* once more," he went on, "that I may finally get rid of it, and turn my attention to something else. You know my published Italian journey was entirely compiled from letters. But the letters I wrote during my second visit to Rome are not of such a kind that I can make use of them; they contain too many references to home and my connections in Weimar, and show too little of my Italian life. Yet there are many expressions of my inward life. I think of extracting these passages, and inserting them in my narrative, to which they will give tone and harmony."

He continued: "It has been said and repeated, that man should strive to know himself: a singular requisition, with which nobody complies, or ever will comply. Man is by all his senses and efforts directed to externals—to the world around him; and he has to know this so far, and to make it so far serviceable, as he requires for his own ends. It is only when he feels joy or sorrow that he knows anything about himself, and only by joy or sorrow is he instructed what to seek and what to shun. Altogether, man is a darkened being; he knows not whence he comes, nor whither he goes; he knows little of the world, and least of himself. I do not know myself, and God forbid I should! But what I wished to say is this: In my fortieth year, while living in Italy, I became wise enough to know thus much of myself—that I had no talent for plastic art, and that this tendency of mine was a false one. If I drew anything, I had not a sufficient inclination for the corporeal. I felt a certain fear lest objects should press too much upon me, and the weak and moderate was more to my taste. If I drew a landscape, and got through the back and middle ground, I never dared to give force enough to the foreground, so that my pictures never produced the proper effect. Then I made no progress except by practice, and was always obliged to begin again if I left off for a while. Yet I was not absolutely destitute of talent—especially for landscape; and Hackert often said, 'If you will stay with me eighteen months, you will produce something that will give pleasure to yourself and others.'"

"But how," said I, "can one be sure that one possesses a real talent for plastic art?"

"Real talent," said he, "has an innate sense for form, relations, and colour, so as soon to manage all that well with but little guidance. Especially, it has a sense for the corporeal, and an inclination to make it palpable by judicious distribution of light. Even in the intervals of practice, it progresses and grows inwardly. Such a talent is not hard to recognize, but is best recognized by a master.

"I visited the palace this morning," continued he, in a lively tone. "The apartments of the Grand Duchess show great taste; and Coudray, with his Italians, has given another proof of his talent. The painters were still busy with the walls; they were Milanese. I spoke Italian with them, and found I had not lost the power. The language brings back the atmosphere of the country. They told me they had last painted the château of the King of Würtemberg and had then been summoned to Gotha; where, however, they could not come to any agreement. They had been heard of in Weimar at the same time, and had come here to decorate the apartments of the Grand Duchess. These worthy people have been absent from Italy three years; but, as they tell me, they intend to go hence straight home, when they have finished painting a scene for our theatre by order of Herr von Spiegel. This you will deem good news. They are very clever fellows. One is pupil of the best scene-painter in Milan; and you may therefore expect a good scene."

After Frederick had cleared the table, Goethe had a small plan of Rome laid before him.

"Rome," said he, "would not do for the permanent abode of people like us. He who would settle there must marry and turn Catholic, else would he lead an insupportable existence. Hackert is not a little proud of having lived there so long a Protestant."

Goethe then showed me, on the plan, the most remarkable squares and buildings. "This," said he, "is the Farnese garden."

"Was it not here that you wrote the witch-scene in *Faust*?"

"No," he replied, "in the Borghese garden."

I now refreshed myself with more landscapes by Claude, and we said a great deal about him.

"Could not now a young artist," said I, "model himself upon him?"

"He who had a similar mind," answered Goethe, "would certainly develop great excellence by forming himself on Claude Lorraine. But hew hose soul Nature had not endowed with similar gifts would at most only borrow single peculiarities from this master, and use them as mere phrases."

Saturday, April 11, 1829.

I found the table laid to-day in the long hall for several persons. Goethe and Frau von Goethe received me. The guests gradually arrived, viz. Madame Schopenhauer; young Count Reinhard, of the French embassy; his brother-in-law, Herr von D——, who was on his way to enter into the Russian service against the Turks; Fräulein Ulrica; and, lastly, Hofrath Vogel.

Goethe entertained the company before dinner with some good Frankfort jokes, especially relating to Rothschild and

Bethmann, showing how one had spoiled the speculations of the other.

Count Reinhard went to court; the rest of us sat down to dinner. They talked about travelling and the bathing-places; and Madame Schopenhauer especially interested us about the arrangement of her estate on the Rhine, near the Island Nonnenwerth.

At dessert, Count Reinhard reappeared, and was praised for the activity with which during his short absence he had not only dined at court but changed his dress twice. He brought news that the new Pope—a Castiglioni—was elected, and Goethe gave the company an account of the traditional ceremonies observed at the election.

Count Reinhard, who had passed the winter at Paris, was able to give us a great deal of desirable information about celebrated statesmen, *literati*, and poets. We talked about Chateaubriand, Guizot, Salvandy, Béranger, Mérimée, and others.

After dinner, when all except myself had departed, Goethe took me into his work-room, and showed me two very interesting papers: letters written in his youth, in 1770, from Strasburg, to his friend Dr. Horn, at Frankfort; one in July, the other in December. In both spoke a young man who had a presentiment of great things to do. In the second, traces of *Werther* were already visible; the Sesenheim connection had been formed, and the happy youth seemed rocked in an ecstasy of the sweetest feelings, and to be lavishing away his days as if half in a dream. The handwriting of the letters was calm, clear, and elegant; it had already assumed the character it always afterwards preserved.

Sunday, April 12, 1829.

Goethe read me his answer to the King of Bavaria. He had presented himself as if actually ascending the steps of the villa, and expressing his feelings by word of mouth in the King's presence.

"It must be difficult," said I, "to preserve the proper tone and manner for such cases."

"Nobody who has had to do with persons of high rank all his life, as I have, will find it difficult. The only point is not to be perfectly natural, but to keep to a certain conventional propriety."

He then spoke of the compilation of his *Second Residence in Rome*, which now occupied him.

"From the letters I wrote at that period," said he, "I plainly see we have certain advantages and disadvantages at every time of life, as compared with earlier or later periods. In my fortieth year I was as clear and decided on some subjects as at present, and in many respects superior to my present self; yet now, in my eightieth, I possess advantages I should not like to exchange for those."

"While you made that remark," said I, "the metamorphosis of plants came before my eyes. Nobody would return from the period of the flower to that of the green leaf, and from that of the fruit or seed to the flower-state."

"The simile expresses my meaning perfectly," said Goethe; and continued, laughing: "Only imagine a perfectly indented leaf; do you think that it would go back from its state of free development to the dull confinement of the cotyledon? And, indeed, it is interesting that we have a plant to serve as symbol of the most advanced age, since, having passed the period of flower and fruit, it still thrives cheerfully without further foundation.

"It is bad, however, that we are so hindered in life by false tendencies, and never know them to be false until we are freed from them."

"But how," said I, "shall we know that a tendency is false?"

"A false tendency," he replied, "is not productive; or if it is, what it produces is of no worth. It is not so difficult to perceive this in others; but with respect to oneself the case is different, and great freedom of mind is required. Even knowledge of the truth is not always of use; we delay, doubt, cannot resolve—just as a man finds it difficult to leave a beloved girl of whose infidelity he has long had repeated proofs. This I say, because I remember how many years were required before I could find out that my tendency to plastic art was false; and how many more to separate myself entirely from it after I was sure of this fact."

"But that tendency has been of such advantage to you, it can hardly be called false."

"I gained insight by it," said he, "and therefore I can make myself easy about it. That is the advantage we draw from every false tendency. He who with inadequate talent devotes himself to music, will never, indeed, become a master, but may learn to know and to value a masterly production. With all my toil, I have not become an artist; but, as I tried every department of art, I have learned to take cognizance of each stroke, and to distinguish merits from defects. This is no small gain; indeed, false tendencies are rarely without gain. The Crusades, for the liberation of the Holy Sepulchre, manifestly represented a false tendency; but they did this good, they weakened the Turks, and prevented them from becoming masters of Europe."

Goethe spoke to me of a book on Peter the Great, by Ségur, which had interested him, and given him much light.

"The situation of Petersburg," said he, "is quite unpardonable; especially when we reflect that the ground rises in the neighbourhood, and that the Emperor could have had a city free from all this trouble arising from overflow of the stream, if he had but gone a little higher up, and had only had the haven in this low place. An old shipmaster represented this to him, and prophesied that the people would be drowned every seventy years. There stood also an old tree, with various marks from times when the waters had risen to a great height. But all this was in vain; the Emperor stood to his whim, and had the tree cut down, that it might not bear witness against him.

"You will confess such conduct is very strange in so great a man. Do you know how I explain it?—Man cannot cast aside his youthful impressions; and this principle goes so far, that even defects to which he is accustomed in his early years and in the midst of which he has passed his happiest time, remain so dear to him that he is dazzled and cannot perceive any fault. Thus would Peter the Great repeat Amsterdam, so dear to his youth, in a metropolis at the mouth of the Neva; as the Dutch are always tempted to build new Amsterdams over and over again in their new possessions."

Monday, April 13, 1829.

To-day, after Goethe had said many good things to me at dinner, I again refreshed myself at dessert with some of Claude's landscapes.

"The collection," said Goethe, "bears the title *Liber Veritatis*; it might as well be styled *Liber Naturæ et Artis*—for here we find nature and art in the highest state and fairest union."

I asked about the origin of Claude Lorraine, and in what school he had formed himself.

"His immediate master," said Goethe, "was Antonio Tasso. But Tasso was a pupil of Paul Brill, whose school and maxims formed the real foundation of Claude and came to their full blossom in him; for what appeared too earnest and severe in those masters is, in Claude Lorraine, developed to the most charming grace and loveliest freedom. There was no going beyond him.

"However, it is difficult to say from whom so great a talent, living in so remarkable a time and situation, actually did learn. He looked about, and appropriated everything that nourished his designs. No doubt Claude Lorraine was as much indebted to the Caracci school as to his immediate and nominal masters.

"Thus, it is usual to say Giulio Romano was a pupil of Raphael; but we might just as well say he was the pupil of his age. Guido Reni alone had a pupil who received so entirely into himself the spirit, soul, and art of his master, that he almost was, and did almost exactly, the same. This was a peculiar case, which has scarcely been repeated.

"The Caracci school, on the contrary, was of a liberating kind; each talent was developed in its natural direction; it produced masters all entirely different one from another. The Caracci seemed born to be teachers of art; they lived when the best had already been done on every side, hence they could present their pupils with models in all departments. They were great artists, great teachers; but I could not say they were truly gifted with the spirit (*geistreich*[1]). It is a somewhat bold saying, but so it seems to me."

After I had looked at a few more landscapes of Claude's, I opened an artist's lexicon, to see what is said of this great master. We found—"his chief merit was in his palette."

We looked at one another, and laughed.

"There, you see," said Goethe, "how much we learn if we rely on books and take in all we find written."

Tuesday, April 14, 1829.

When I went in to-day, Goethe was at table with Hofrath Meyer, talking about Italy and art. He ordered to be laid before us a volume of Claude Lorraine, in which Meyer found the landscape for the original of which the newspapers told us that Peel had given four thousand pounds. It is a beautiful picture, and Mr. Peel has made no bad bargain.

On the right side of the picture is a group of people sitting and standing. A shepherd is leaning over a girl, whom he seems to be instructing to play upon the pipe. In the middle is a lake, in the full light of the sun; on the left are cattle grazing in the shade of a grove.

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[1] *Geistreich* frequently means little more than clever or ingenious; but it seems here to have a deeper signification, and the term "gifted with the spirit" has been borrowed from the American.—J. O.

[Conversation led by Meyer: beginning about the King of Bavaria's place at Rome and who occupied it before him; then about its distance from the Vatican and the shortest route thereto; and concluding with an account of how Bury, Hirt, Lips, and Meyer, in their youth got into a dispute in the Tiber ferry-boat, as to the respective merits of Raphael and Michael Angelo, and, resolving to settle it before landing, made the ferryman row them backwards and forwards most of the night.]

Hofrath Meyer continued to tell us about Rome.

"This dispute about Raphael and Michael Angelo," said he, "was introduced whenever a number of artists large enough to take the two sides met together. It generally began at an inn, where we drank cheap good wine. Pictures, and parts of pictures, were referred to; and when the opposition party would not concede this or that, an immediate inspection of the pictures was found requisite. We left the inn and hurried to the Sistine Chapel, the keys of which were in the hands of a shoemaker, who would always open the door for a few groschen. When we were before the pictures the work of demonstration began; and after the dispute had lasted long enough we returned to the inn, to make up our differences over a bottle of wine, and to settle all controversies. Thus we went on every day, and the shoemaker by the Sistine Chapel received many a fee of four groschen."

Mention was then made of another shoemaker, who generally hammered his leather on an antique marble head. "It was the portrait of a Roman emperor," said Meyer; "the antique work stood before the shoemaker's door, and we often saw him engaged in this laudable occupation."

Wednesday, April 15, 1829.

We talked of people who, without having any real talent, are excited to productiveness, and of others who write about things they do not understand.

"What seduces young people," said Goethe, "is this—we live in a time when so much culture is diffused that it has communicated itself to the atmosphere a young man breathes. Poetical and philosophic thoughts live and move within him, he has sucked them in with his very breath; but he thinks they are his own property, and utters them as such. But after he has restored to the time what he has received from it, he remains poor. He is like a fountain that plays awhile with water supplied but ceases to flow as soon as the liquid treasure is exhausted."

Tuesday, September 1, 1829.

I told Goethe of a person now travelling through Weimar who had heard a lecture of Hegel's on the proof of the existence of a God. Goethe agreed with me that the time for such lectures was gone by.

"The period of doubt," said he, "is past; men now doubt as little the existence of a God as their own [1]; though the nature of the divinity, the immortality, the peculiarities of our own souls, and their connection with our bodies, are eternal problems, with respect to which our philosophers take us no further. A French philosopher of the most recent times begins his chapter confidently thus:

"'It is acknowledged that man consists of two parts, body and soul; so we will begin with the body, and then speak of the soul.'

"Fichte went a little further, and extricated himself somewhat more cleverly from the dilemma, by saying, 'We shall treat of man regarded as a body, and of man regarded as a soul.' He felt too well that a whole so closely combined could not be separated. Kant has unquestionably done the best service, by drawing the limits beyond which human intellect is not able to penetrate, and leaving at rest the insoluble problems. What a deal have people philosophized about immortality!—and how far have they got? I doubt not of our immortality, for Nature cannot dispense with the entelechy. But we are not all in like manner immortal; and he who would manifest himself in future as a great entelechy must be one now.

"While the Germans are tormenting themselves with philosophical problems, the English, with their great practical understanding, laugh at us and win the world. Everybody knows their declamations against the slave-trade; and while they have palmed upon us all sorts of humane maxims as the foundation of their proceedings, it is at last discovered that their true motive is a practical object, which the English always notoriously require in order to act, and which should have been known before. In their extensive domains on the west coast of Africa they themselves use the blacks, and it is against their interest for blacks to be carried off. They have founded large colonies of negroes in America, which are very productive, and yearly return a large profit in blacks. From these they can supply the demand in North America; and since they thus carry on a highly profitable trade, an importation from without would be against their commercial interests: so they preach with a practical view against the inhuman African slave-trade. Even at the Congress of Vienna, the English envoy denounced it with great zeal; but the Portuguese envoy had the good sense to reply quietly that he did not know they had come together to sit in judgment on the world or to decide upon principles of morality. He well knew the object of England; and he had also his own, which he knew how to plead for and to obtain."

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[1] This is a statement that seems to have periodicity. We are familiar with it to-day.

Sunday, December 6, 1829.

To-day after dinner, Goethe read me the first scene of the second act of *Faust*.[1] The effect was great. We are once more transported into Faust's study, where Mephistopheles finds all as he had left it. He takes from the hook Faust's old study-gown, and a thousand moths and insects flutter out from it. By the directions of Mephistopheles as to where these are to settle down, the locality is brought very clearly before our eyes. He puts on the gown, intending to play the master once more, while Faust lies behind a curtain in a state of paralysis. He pulls the bell, which gives such an awful tone among the old solitary convent-halls that the doors spring open and the walls tremble. The servant rushes in, and finds in Faust's seat Mephistopheles, whom he does not recognize but for whom he has respect. In answer to inquiries he gives news of Wagner, who has now become a celebrated man, and is hoping for the return of his master—he is, we hear, at this moment very busy in his laboratory, trying to make a Homunculus. The servant retires, and the Bachelor enters—the same whom we knew some years before as a shy young student when Mephistopheles (in Faust's gown) made game of him. He is now a man, and so full of conceit that even Mephistopheles can do nothing with him, but moves his chair farther and farther and at last addresses the pit.

Goethe read the scene to the end. I was pleased with his youthful productive strength, and with the closeness of the whole. "As the conception," said Goethe, "is so old—for I have had it in my mind for fifty years—the materials have accumulated to such a degree that the difficulty is to separate and reject. The invention of the second part is really as old as I say; but it may be an advantage that I have not written it down till now when my knowledge of the world is so much clearer. I am like one who in his youth has a great deal of small silver and copper money; which in the course of his life he constantly changes for the better, so that at last the property of his youth stands before him in pieces of pure gold."

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[1] That is, the second act of the second part of *Faust*, which was not published entire till after Goethe's death.—J. O.

We spoke about the character of the Bachelor. "Is he not meant," said I, "to represent a certain class of ideal philosophers?"

"No," said Goethe, "the arrogance peculiar to youth, of which we had such striking examples after our war for freedom, is personified in him. Indeed, everyone believes in his youth that the world really began with him, and that all merely exists for his sake.

"Thus, in the East, there was a man who every morning collected his people about him, and would not go to work till he had commanded the sun to rise. But he was wise enough not to command till the sun of its own accord was on the point of appearing."

Goethe remained awhile absorbed in silent thought; then he began as follows:

"When old, we think of worldly matters otherwise than when young. Thus I cannot but think that the dæmons, to tease and make sport with men, have placed among them single figures so alluring that everyone strives after them, and so great that nobody reaches them. Thus they set up Raphael with whom thought and act were equally perfect; some distinguished followers have approached him, but none have equalled him. Thus, too, they set up Mozart as something unattainable in music; and thus Shakespeare in poetry. I know what you can say against this thought; but I only mean natural character, the great innate qualities. Thus, too, Napoleon is unattainable. That the Russians were so moderate as not to go to Constantinople is indeed very great; but we find a similar trait in Napoleon, he had the moderation not to go to Rome."

Much was associated with this copious theme; I thought in silence that the dæmons had intended something of the kind with Goethe—he is a form too alluring not to be striven after, and too great to be reached.

Wednesday, December 16, 1829.

To-day, after dinner, Goethe read me the second scene of the second act of *Faust*, where Mephistopheles visits Wagner, who is on the point of making a human being by chemical means. The work succeeds; the Homunculus appears in the phial, as a shining being, and is at once active. He repels Wagner's questions upon incomprehensible subjects; reasoning is not his business; he wishes to *act*, and begins with our hero, Faust, who, in his paralysed condition, needs a higher aid. As a being to whom the present is perfectly clear and transparent, the Homunculus sees into the soul of the sleeping Faust; who, enraptured by a lovely dream, beholds Leda visited by swans, while she is bathing in a pleasant spot. The Homunculus, by describing this dream, brings a most charming picture before our eyes. Mephistopheles sees nothing of it, and the Homunculus taunts him with his northern nature.

"Generally," said Goethe, "you will perceive that Mephistopheles appears to disadvantage beside the Homunculus; who is like him in clearness of intellect, and so much superior in his tendency to the beautiful and to a useful activity. He styles him cousin; for such spiritual beings as this Homunculus, not yet saddened and limited by a thorough assumption of humanity, were classed with the dæmons, and thus there is a sort of relationship between the two."

"Certainly," said I, "Mephistopheles here appears a subordinate; yet I cannot help thinking he has had a secret influence on the production of the Homunculus. We have known him in this way before; and, indeed, in the *Helena* he always appears as secretly working. Thus he again elevates himself with regard to the whole, and in his lofty repose he can well afford to put up with a little in particulars."

"Your feeling of the position is very correct," said Goethe; "indeed, I have doubted whether I ought not to put some verses into the mouth of Mephistopheles when he goes to Wagner and when the Homunculus is still in a state of formation, so that his co-operation may be expressed."

"It would do no harm," said I. "Yet this is intimated by the words with which Mephistopheles closes the scene:

'Am Ende hängen wir doch ab
Von Creaturen die wir machten.'"

We are dependent, after all,
On creatures that we make.

"True," said Goethe, "that would be almost enough for the attentive; but I will think about some additional verses."

"But those concluding words are very great, and will not easily be penetrated to their full extent."

"I think," said Goethe, "I have given them a bone to pick. A father who has six sons is a lost man, let him do what he may. Kings and ministers, too, who have raised many persons to high places, may have something to think about from their own experience."

Faust's dream about Leda again came into my head, and I regarded this as a most important feature.

"It is wonderful to me," said I, "how the several parts of such a work bear upon, perfect, and sustain one another! By this dream of Leda, *Helena* gains its proper foundation. There we have a constant allusion to swans and the child of a swan; but here we have the act itself, and when we come afterwards to *Helena*, with the sensible impression of such a situation, how much more clear and perfect does all appear!"

Goethe said I was right.

"You will see," said he, "that in these earlier acts the chords of the classic and romantic are constantly struck; so that, as on a rising ground, where both forms of poetry are brought out and in some sort balance one another, we may ascend to *Helena*.

"The French," continued Goethe, "now begin to think aright on these matters. Classic and romantic, say they, are equally good: the only point is to use these forms with judgment, and to be capable of excellence—you can be absurd in both, and then one is as worthless as the other. This, I think, is rational enough, and may content us for a while."

Sunday, December 20, 1829.

Dined with Goethe. We spoke of the Chancellor; and I asked whether he brought any news of Manzoni, on his return from Italy.

"He wrote to me about him," said Goethe. "The Chancellor paid Manzoni a visit; he lives on his estate near Milan, and is (I am sorry to say) always ill."

"It is odd," said I, "that persons of distinguished talents, especially poets, have so often weak constitutions."

"Their extraordinary achievements," said Goethe, "presuppose a very delicate organization, which makes them susceptible to unusual emotions and capable of hearing celestial voices. Such an organization, in conflict with the world and the elements, is easily disturbed and injured; he who does not, like Voltaire, combine with great sensibility an equally uncommon toughness, is liable to constant illness. Schiller was always ill. When I first knew him, I thought he could not live a month; but he too had a certain toughness; he kept going for many years, and would have done so longer if he had lived in a healthier way."

We spoke of the theatre, and how far a certain performance had been successful.

"I have seen Unzelmann in the part," said Goethe. "It was always a pleasure, on account of his perfect mental freedom, which he conveyed to us; for it is with acting as with all other arts—what the artist does or has done excites in us the mood he was in when he did it. A free mood in the artist makes us free; a constrained one makes us uncomfortable. We usually find this freedom of the artist where he is fully equal to his subject. It is for this we are so pleased with Dutch pictures; the artists painted the life around them, of which they were perfect masters. If we are to feel this freedom of mind in an actor, he must—by study, imagination, and natural disposition—be perfect master of his part, must have all bodily requisites at his command, and must be upheld by a certain youthful energy. But study is not enough without imagination, and study and imagination together are not enough without natural disposition. Women do the most through imagination and temperament; thence came the excellence of Madame Wolff."

We pursued this subject, talking of the chief actors of the Weimar stage, and their performance in several parts.

Meanwhile, *Faust* came once more into my head, and I talked of the way to render the Homunculus clear on the stage. "If we do not see the little man himself," said I, "we must see the light in the bottle, and his important words must be uttered in a way that would surpass the capacity of a child."

"Wagner," said Goethe, "must not let the bottle go out of his hands, and the voice must sound as if it came from the bottle. It would be a part for a ventriloquist such as I have heard. A man of that kind would solve the difficulty."

We then talked of the Grand Carnival, and the possibility of representing it upon the stage. "It would be a little more than the market-place at Naples," said I.

"It would require a very large theatre," said Goethe, "and is hardly to be imagined."

"I hope to see it some day," was my answer. "I look forward especially to the elephant, led by Prudence, and surmounted by Victory, with Hope and Fear in chains on each side. This is an allegory that could not easily be surpassed."

"The elephant would not be the first on the stage," said Goethe. "At Paris there is one, which forms an entire character. He belongs to a popular party, and takes the crown from one king and places it on another, which must indeed have an imposing effect. Then, when he is called at the end of the piece, he appears quite alone, makes his bow, and retires. So you see we might reckon on an elephant for our carnival. But the whole scene is much too large, and requires an uncommon kind of manager."

"Still, it is so brilliant and effective that a stage will scarcely allow it to escape. Then how it builds itself up, and becomes more and more striking! First, there are the beautiful gardeners, male and female; who decorate the stage, and at the same time form a mass, so that the various objects as they increase in importance are never without spectators and a background. Then, after the elephants, there is the team of dragons, coming from the background, through the air, and soaring overhead. Then the appearance of the great Pan; and how at last all seems afire, until put out by the wet clouds that roll to the spot. With all this carried out as you have conceived, the public will, in its amazement, confess that it has not senses and intellect enough to appreciate such spectacular riches."

"Pray, no more about the public," said Goethe; "I wish to hear nothing about it. The chief point is, that the piece is written; the world may now do with it as it pleases and use it as far as it can."

We then talked of the Boy Lenker.

"That Faust is concealed under the mask of Plutus, and Mephistopheles under that of Avarice, you will have already perceived. But who is the Boy Lenker?"

I hesitated, and could not answer.

"It is Euphorion," said Goethe.

"But how can he appear in the carnival here, when he is not born till the third act?"

"Euphorion," replied Goethe, "is not a human, but an allegorical being. In him is personified poetry; which is bound to neither time, place, nor person. The same spirit who afterwards chooses to be Euphorion appears here as the Boy Lenker, and is so far like a spectre that he can be present everywhere and at all times."

Sunday, December 27, 1829.

To-day, after dinner, Goethe read me the scene of the paper-money.[1]

"You recollect," said he, "that at the imperial assembly the end of the song is that there is a want of money and that Mephistopheles promises to provide some. This theme continues through the masquerade; when Mephistopheles contrives that the Emperor, while in the mask of the great Pan, shall sign a paper, which, thus endowed with a money-value, is multiplied a thousandfold and circulated. Now, in this scene the affair is discussed before the Emperor, who does not know what he has done. The treasurer hands over the bank-notes, and makes everything clear. The Emperor is at first enraged; but afterwards, on a closer inspection of his profit, makes splendid presents of paper-money to those around him. As he retires, he drops some thousand crowns; the fat court-fool picks these up, and goes off at once to turn his paper into land."

While Goethe read this fine scene, I was pleased with the happy notion of deducing the paper-money from Mephistopheles, and thus so strikingly bringing in and immortalizing one of the main interests of the present day.

Scarcely had the scene been read and discussed, when Goethe's son came down and seated himself with us at the table. He told us of Cooper's last novel; which he had read, and which he now described in his graphic manner. We made no allusion to the scene we had just read; but he began of his own accord to tell a great deal about Prussian treasury-bills, and to say that they were paid for above their value. While young Goethe went on talking in this way, I looked at the father with a smile, which he returned; and thus we gave each other to understand how very apropos was the subject of the scene.

Wednesday, December 30, 1829.

To-day, after dinner, Goethe read me the next scene.

"Now they have got money at the imperial court," said he, "they want to be amused. The Emperor wishes to see Paris and Helen; and through magical art they are to appear in person. However, since Mephistopheles has nothing to do with Greek antiquity, and has no power over such personages, this task is assigned to Faust, who succeeds in it perfectly. The scene showing the means Faust must adopt to render the apparition possible is not complete yet, but I will read it to you next time. The actual appearance of Paris and Helen you shall hear to-day."

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[1] In the second part of *Faust*.—J. O.

[This section closes with a rhapsody upon the reading of the scene of this "command performance"—with Mephisto as prompter and with Faust and the astrologer right and left of the stage: Faust rather inclined to get among the "characters" when the real Helen appears.]

1830

Sunday, January 3, 1830.

Goethe showed me the English annual, *The Keepsake,* for 1830, with very fine engravings, and some extremely interesting letters from Lord Byron, which I read after dinner. He himself had taken up the latest French translation of his *Faust,* by Gérard; which he turned over, and seemed occasionally to read.

"Some singular thoughts pass through my head," said he. "This book is now read in a language over which Voltaire ruled fifty years ago. You cannot understand my thoughts upon this subject, and have no idea of the influence Voltaire and his great contemporaries had in my youth, and how they governed the whole civilized world. My biography does not clearly show the influence of these men in my youth, and what pains it cost me to defend myself against them and to maintain my own ground in a true relation to nature."

We talked further about Voltaire; and Goethe recited to me his poem *Les Systèmes,* from which I perceived how he must have studied and appropriated such things in early life.

He praised Gérard's translation as very successful, although mostly in prose.

"I do not like," he said, "to read my *Faust* any more in German; but in this French translation all seems again fresh, new, and spirited. *Faust* is, however, quite incommensurable, and all attempts to bring it nearer to the understanding are vain. Also, the first part is the product of a rather dark state in the individual. However, this very darkness has a charm for men's minds; and they work upon it till they are tired, as upon all insoluble problems."

Sunday, January 10, 1830.

This afternoon, Goethe afforded me great pleasure by reading the scene in which Faust visits the Mothers.

The novelty and unexpectedness of the subject, and Goethe's manner of reading the scene, struck me so forcibly that I felt myself wholly transported into the situation of Faust when he shudders at the communication from Mephistopheles.

Although I had heard and felt the whole, yet so much remained an enigma to me that I asked Goethe for some explanation. But he, as usual, wrapped himself up in mystery, as he looked on me with wide-open eyes and repeated the words:

"Die Mütter! Mütter! 's klingt so wunderlich."

The Mothers! Mothers! nay, it sounds so strange.

"I can reveal to you no more," said he, "except that I found in Plutarch that in ancient Greece mention was made of the Mothers as divinities. This is all that I owe to others, the rest is my own invention. Take the manuscript home with you, study it carefully, and see what you can make of it."

I was very happy while studying this remarkable scene once more in quiet; and took the following view of the peculiar character and influence, the abode and outward circumstances, of the Mothers:

Could we imagine that that huge sphere our earth had an empty space in its centre, so that hundreds of miles might be travelled in one direction without coming in contact with anything corporeal, this would be the abode of those unknown goddesses to whom Faust descends. They live, as it were, beyond all place; for nothing stands firm in their neighbourhood: they also live beyond all time; for no heavenly body, that can rise or set and mark the alternation of day and night, shines upon them.[1]

Dwelling in eternal obscurity and loneliness, these Mothers are creative beings; they are the creating and sustaining principle from which proceeds everything that has life and form on the surface of the earth. Whatever ceases to breathe returns to them as a spiritual nature, and they preserve it until there arises occasion for its renewed existence. All souls and forms of what has been, or will be, hover about like clouds in the vast space of their abode. So are the Mothers surrounded; and the magician must enter their dominion, if he would obtain power over the form of a being and call back former existences to seeming life.

[He goes on to admit that this is a poetic anthropomorphism.]

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[1] In our own century, also, it has been seriously advanced, as one of the reasons for discrediting the reality of Time, that our methods of measuring it are probably incurably defective. This school of thought might be termed the *Struthionic*.

Sunday, January 24, 1830.

"I have lately received a letter from a celebrated salt-miner at Stotternheim," said Goethe, "which opens in a remarkable manner, and which I must read to you.

"'I have had an experience,' he writes, 'that will not be lost on me.' But what follows this introduction? Nothing less than a loss of at least a thousand dollars. The shaft by which you go down twelve hundred feet to the rock-salt, through a soft soil and stone, he has incautiously neglected to prop up at the sides. The soft soil has detached itself, and has so filled up the pit that an extremely expensive operation is required to get it out again. He will, then, at a depth of twelve hundred feet, put in metal tubes, to be secure against a similar mischance. He should have done this at first; and he certainly would have done it, were there not in such people a degree of rashness of which we have no notion and which is requisite for such enterprises. He is very easy about his misfortune, and writes, 'I have had an experience that will not be lost on me.' This is the sort of man that we like; who, without complaining, is at once active again, and always on his feet. What say you to it? Is it not good?"

"It reminds me of Sterne, who complains that he had not used his sorrows like a reasonable man."

"It is something similar," said Goethe.

"I am also reminded of Behrisch," continued I, "when he tells you what experience is. I have lately been reading the chapter for renewed edification.[1] 'Experience,' says he, 'is nothing but that a person experiences by experience what he would not willingly have experienced.'"

"Yes," said Goethe, smiling, "such are the old jokes with which we so shamefully wasted our time."

"Behrisch," said I, "seems to have been a man of grace and elegance. How pleasant is the joke in the wine-cellar, where in the evening he tries to prevent the young man from visiting his mistress, and does it in the happiest way, fastening on his sword—now this way, now that—till he makes everybody laugh, and the young man forget the appointed time."

"Yes," said Goethe, "that was pleasant; it would have been one of the best scenes on the stage; indeed, Behrisch was a good all-round character for the theatre."

We then talked over all the oddities told of Behrisch in

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[1] That is to say, in Goethe's Autobiography (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*), Part II, Book vii.—J. O.

Goethe's *Life*; his grey clothes—where silk, satin, and wool, made strong contrasts one with another—and his constant care always to dress himself in a new grey. Then how he wrote poems, imitated the compositor, and extolled the dignity of the penman; and how it was his favourite pastime to lie at the window, to observe the dress of the passers-by, and in his thoughts so to alter it as to make the people highly ridiculous.

"Then his customary joke with the postman; how do you like it? is not *that* droll?"

"I do not know it," said I; "there is nothing about it in your memoirs."

"Strange!" said Goethe, "then I will tell it you. When we were lying together at the window, and Behrisch saw the letter-carrier coming up the street, and going from one house to another, he would take out a groschen, and lay it by him on the window-sill.

"'Do you see the letter-carrier?' said he, turning to me. 'He is coming nearer and nearer, and will be over here immediately, I can see: he has a letter for you; and what a letter! no ordinary affair, but a letter with a cheque in it; with a cheque for—I will not say how much; see, he is coming in. No! but he will come immediately. There he is again. Now! Here! here, friend! this is the place! He goes by—how stupid! O, how stupid! how can he be so stupid, and act so badly! Badly in two respects! Badly towards you, to whom he does not bring the cheque he had in his hands; and badly towards himself, to lose this groschen, which I had taken out for him, and which I now put up again.' Then, with the greatest dignity, he would put the groschen again into his pocket, and we had something to laugh at."

I asked Goethe whether he had ever seen Behrisch in later days.

"I saw him again," said Goethe, "soon after my arrival at Weimar, about the year 1776, when with the Duke I made a visit to Dessau, whither Behrisch had been invited as tutor of the Crown Prince. I found him the same as ever—a polished courtier of the best humour."

"What did he say," asked I, "about your becoming so famous in the interval?"

"'Did I not tell you so?' were his first words. 'Was it not right that you did not get your verses printed then, and that you waited till you had done something really good? The things were indeed not so bad, or I should not have written them out.

If we had remained together, you should not have had even the others printed. I would have copied them out for you, and they would have gone off quite as well.' You see he was the same as ever. He was liked at court. I always saw him at the Prince's table. I saw him for the last time in the year 1801, when he had become old but was still in the best of spirits. He occupied some very handsome apartments in the castle; one of which he completely filled with geraniums, which were then all the rage. Now the botanists had made some distinctions and divisions among the geraniums, and had given a certain class the name of pelargoniums. This the old gentleman could not bear, and he abused the botanists sorely. 'The blockheads!' said he, 'I think I have filled my room with geraniums, and now they come in and tell me they are pelargoniums. What have I to do with them if they are not geraniums? and what have I to do with pelargoniums?' Thus he would go on for the half-hour together—you see that he kept up his old character."

We then talked about the classical Walpurgis Night,[1] the beginning of which Goethe had lately read me.

"The mythological figures that crowd upon me," said he, "are innumerable; but I restrain myself, and select those that produce the proper pictorial effect. Faust has now met Chiron, and I hope I shall be successful with the scene. If I work hard I shall have done the Walpurgis Night in a couple of months. Nothing more shall take me off *Faust*; for it will be odd enough if I live to finish it, and yet it is possible. The fifth act is as good as done, and the fourth will almost write itself."

Goethe then talked about his health, and congratulated himself on keeping so constantly well. "My good state of preservation," said he, "I owe to Vogel—without him I should have gone off long ago. Vogel was born a physician, and is one of the most decided geniuses I ever knew. However, we will not say how good he is, for fear he should be taken away from us."

(Sup.) Wednesday, January 27, 1830.

I dined very happily with Goethe. He spoke with great commendation of Herr von Martius. "His discovery of the spiral tendency," said he, "is of the highest importance. If I had anything more to desire in him, it would be that he should maintain his discovered primitive phenomenon (*Urphänomen*) with decided boldness, and have the courage to announce a fact as a law, without too much seeking its confirmation far and wide."

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[1] In the second part of *Faust*.—J. O.

He then showed me the transactions of the scientific assembly at Heidelberg, with facsimiles of the handwriting printed on the back; which we observed, forming our conclusions upon the character.

"I know very well," said Goethe, "that science does not derive so much benefit from these meetings as might be imagined; but they are excellent, as people learn to know and esteem one another—whence it follows that a new doctrine of a distinguished man gains currency, and he in his turn becomes inclined to acknowledge and assist us in our aims in another department. In every circumstance we see that something happens, and nobody can tell what may come of it."

Goethe then showed me a letter from an English author, with the address—To his Highness the Prince Goethe. "For this title I have probably to thank the German journalists," said Goethe, laughing, "who, out of too great love, have named me the prince of German poets. And the consequence of the innocent German error is the equally innocent English one."

Goethe then returned to Herr von Martius, and praised him for possessing imagination. "In fact, a great scientist without this high gift is impossible. I do not mean an imagination that goes into the vague and imagines things that do not exist; I mean one that does not abandon the actual soil of the earth, and steps to supposed and conjectured things by the standard of the real and the known. Then it may prove whether this or that supposition be possible, and whether it is not in contradiction with known laws. Such an imagination presupposes an enlarged tranquil mind, which has at its command a wide survey of the living world and its laws."

While we were speaking, there arrived a packet containing a translation of *Die Geschwister* (The Brother and Sister) into Bohemian, which appeared to give Goethe great pleasure.

Sunday, January 31, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. We talked of Milton.

"I have lately," said Goethe, "read his *Samson*, which has more of the antique spirit than any production of any other modern poet. He is very great, and his own blindness enabled him to describe with so much truth the situation of Samson.

Milton was really a poet, to whom we owe all possible respect."[1]

The newspapers were brought in, and we saw in the Berlin theatrical intelligence that whales and sea-monsters had been introduced on the stage there.

Goethe read in the French paper *Le Temps* an article on the enormous revenue of the English clergy, which amounts to more than that of all the rest of Christendom put together.

"It has been maintained," said Goethe, "that the world is governed by pay; I know that from pay we can find out whether it is well or ill governed."

Wednesday, February 3, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. We talked of Mozart.

"I saw him," said Goethe, "when he was seven and gave a concert while travelling our way. I myself was about fourteen, and remember perfectly the little man with his frisure and sword."

I stared; it seemed to me almost wonderful that Goethe was old enough to have seen Mozart when a child.

(Sup.) Saturday, February 6, 1830.

Dined with Frau von Goethe. Young Goethe related of his grandmother, "Frau Rath Goethe," of Frankfort, whom he had visited twenty years before as a student, and with whom he was one day invited to dine at the Prince Primate's—that as the Prince wore his usual clerical costume, she took him for an abbé, and paid him no particular respect; until she gradually perceived, from the deportment of the rest of the guests, that he was the Primate.

Sunday, February 7, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. A great deal of conversation about the Prince Primate—that he had contrived to defend him by a skilful turn at the Empress of Austria's table; the Prince's deficiency in philosophy; his dilettante love of painting, without taste; the picture given to Miss Gore; his goodness of heart and weak liberality, which at last brought him to poverty. Conversation on nature of the *Discourteous*. After dinner young Goethe, with Walter and Wolf, appeared in his masquerade dress, in the character of Klingsohr, and then went to court.

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[1] This recalls the Collector of Stamps, whose bumps Charles Lamb took a candle to examine.

Wednesday, February 10, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. He spoke with real gratification of the poem written by Riemer for the festival of the 2nd of February, saying, "All that Riemer does is fit to be seen by both master and journeyman."

We talked also of the classical Walpurgis Night, and he said that he came to things that surprised even himself. The subject, too, had become more diffuse than he had expected.

"I am not half through it," said he, "but I will keep to it, and hope to finish it by Easter. You shall see nothing more of it before; but as soon as it is done I will give it to you to take home, that you may examine it quietly. If you made up the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth volumes,[1] so that we might send off the last part at Easter, it would be a good arrangement, and we should have the summer open for something great. I would occupy myself with *Faust*, and endeavour to get over the fourth act."

I promised every assistance.

Goethe then sent his servant to inquire after the Grand Duchess Dowager, who had been very ill and seemed in a dangerous state.

"She ought not to have seen the masquerade," said he; "but princes are accustomed to have their own way, and thus all the protests of the court and the physicians were in vain. With the same strong will with which she once confronted Napoleon, she now resists her bodily weakness; and I can see already that she will go off, like the Grand Duke, in the full vigour and mastery of her mind, although her body may have ceased to obey it."

Goethe seemed in low spirits, and remained silent for a while. Soon, however, we again conversed on cheerful subjects; and he told me of a book written in defence of Sir Hudson Lowe.

"It contains," he said, "most valuable traits, which can only have been derived from eye-witnesses. You know that Napoleon ordinarily wore a dark-green uniform. It was at last so much worn and sun-burnt as to lose its colour entirely, and it became necessary to supply its place with another. He wished for the same dark-green colour, but no article of the sort was to be found in the island. There was indeed a green cloth; but the colour was not pure, and ran into a yellowish tinge. The lord of the world found it intolerable to put such a colour on his body; and nothing was left but to turn his old uniform, and wear it in that way.

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[1] That is, of Goethe's complete works.—J. O.

"What do you say to that? Is it not a perfectly tragic trait? Is it not touching to see the master of kings so reduced at last that he must wear a turned uniform? And yet, when we reflect that such an end befell a man who had trampled under foot the life and happiness of millions, his fate appears after all very mild. Fate is here a Nemesis, who, in consideration of the hero's greatness, cannot avoid being a little generous. Napoleon affords an example of the danger of elevating oneself to the Absolute and sacrificing everything to the carrying out of an idea."

We said a good deal more on this subject, and I then went to the theatre to see the *Star of Seville*.

Sunday, February 14, 1830.

To-day, on my way to Goethe, who had invited me to dinner, I heard of the Grand Duchess Dowager's death, which had just happened. I entered the house with some apprehension. The servants said his daughter-in-law was gone to him to tell him the sad news.

"For more than fifty years," thought I, "he was attached to this princess, and blessed with her especial favour and friendship; her death must deeply move him."

I entered his room; to find him in his usual cheerfulness and vigour, taking his soup with his daughter-in-law and grandchildren, as if nothing had happened.

We went on talking cheerfully of indifferent things. Presently all the bells began to toll; Frau von Goethe looked at me, and we talked louder, that the tone of the death-bells might not shock him; for we thought he felt like us. However, he did not feel like us. He sat before us like a being of a higher order, inaccessible to earthly woes.

Hofrath Vogel was announced. He sat down, and told us all the circumstances of the last hours of the noble dead; to which Goethe listened with the same perfect calmness and composure. Vogel went away, and we continued our conversation on other subjects.

We talked a great deal about the *Chaos*, and Goethe praised the "Reflections on Play," in the last number. When Frau von Goethe retired with her children, I was left alone with Goethe.

He talked to me of his classical Walpurgis Night; saying he was getting forward in it every day, and effecting wonderful things, beyond his expectation.

He then showed me a letter he had to-day received from the

King of Bavaria. The King's true and noble turn of mind was manifest in every line.

Hofrath Soret was now announced, and joined us; he came with a message of condolence from her Imperial Highness to Goethe, which contributed to make him even more cheerful. He spoke of the celebrated Ninon de l'Enclos; who, in her sixteenth year, and in all her beauty, lay apparently on her death-bed, and with the most perfect composure comforted those who stood around it, saying, "What is it, after all? I leave mere mortals behind me!" However, she lived to the age of ninety; after having to her eightieth year made happy or desperate hundreds of lovers.

Goethe then talked of Gozzi; and his theatre at Venice, where the actors had merely subjects given them and filled up the details impromptu. Gozzi said there were only six-and-thirty tragic situations. Schiller thought there were more, but could never succeed in finding even so many.

Then many interesting things were said about Grimm; his life and character, and his distrust of paper-money.

Wednesday, February 17, 1830.

We talked of the theatre—of the colour of the scenes and costumes. The result was as follows:

Generally, the scenes should have a tone favourable to every colour of the dresses; like Beuther's scenery, which has more or less of a brownish tinge, and brings out the colour of the dresses with perfect freshness. But if the scene-painter is obliged to depart from so favourable an undecided tone, and to represent a red or yellow chamber, a white tent or a green garden, the actors should be clever enough to avoid similar colours in their dresses. If an actor in a red uniform and green breeches enters a red room, the upper part of his body vanishes, and only his legs are seen; if, with the same dress, he enters a green garden, his legs vanish, and the upper part of his body is conspicuous. I saw an actor in a white uniform and dark breeches, the upper part of whose body completely vanished in a white tent, while the legs disappeared against a dark background.

"Even when the scene-painter is obliged to have a red or yellow chamber," said Goethe, "or a green garden or wood, these colours should be somewhat faint and hazy, that every dress in the foreground may be relieved and produce the proper effect."

We talked about the *Iliad*, and Goethe called my attention to the following beautiful *motif*—viz. that Achilles is put into a state of inaction for some time, that the other characters may appear and develop themselves.

Of his *Wahlverwandtschaften*, he says there is not a touch in it that he had not experienced, and at the same time not a touch just as he had experienced it. He said the same thing of the Sesenheim story.[1]

After dinner we looked through a portfolio of the Netherland school. A view of a harbour, where on one side men are taking in fresh water, and on the other some are playing dice on a barrel, gave occasion for some remarks as to how the real must be avoided, so as not to injure the effect of a work of art. The principal light falls on the top of the barrel; the dice are thrown, as may be seen by the gestures of the men; but they are not marked on the surface of the barrel, as they would have intercepted the light, and thus have marred the effect.

Ruysdael's studies for his "Churchyard" were then looked over, and we saw what pains even such a master had taken.

Sunday, February 21, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. He showed me the air-plant (*Luftpflanze*), which I looked at with great interest. I remarked therein an effort to continue its existence as long as possible, before permitting its successor to manifest itself.

"I have determined," said Goethe, "to read neither the *Temps* nor the *Globe*, for a month to come. Things are in such a position that some event of importance must happen within that time; I will wait till the news comes to me from without. My classical Walpurgis Night will gain from this abstinence; besides, nothing is got from such interests—a consideration too often left out of mind."

He then showed me a letter written by Boisserée, from Munich. Boisserée spoke especially of the *Second Residence in Rome*, and on some points in the last number of *Kunst und Alterthum* (Art and Antiquity). His judgment showed equal good will and profundity.

Goethe then spoke of a new picture, by Cornelius, as being very fine in conception and execution; and the remark was made, that the real occasion for the good colouring of a picture lay in the composition.

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[1] The story of Frederica in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.—J. O.

Wednesday, February 24, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. We talked of Homer. I remarked that the interposition of the gods immediately borders on the Real.

"That is infinitely delicate and human," said Goethe, "and I thank Heaven the times are gone by when the French called this interposition of the gods *machinery*. But really to learn to appreciate merits so vast required some time, for it demanded a complete regeneration of their culture."

He said that to enhance the beauty of the apparition of Helena he had given it a new touch, suggested by a remark of mine, which did honour to my perceptions.

After dinner, Goethe showed me a sketch from a picture by Cornelius—Orpheus, before the throne of Pluto, supplicating for the release of Eurydice. The picture seemed to us well considered, and the details excellent; yet it did not quite satisfy or yield a genuine pleasure to the mind. Perhaps, we thought, the colouring may bring with it greater harmony; or perhaps the following moment, when Orpheus has conquered the heart of Pluto, and Eurydice is restored to him, would have been more favourable—the situation would in that case not have been fraught with excitement and expectation, but rather with complete satisfaction.

Monday, March 1, 1830.

Dined at Goethe's, with Hofrath Voigt, of Jena. The conversation turned entirely on subjects of natural history, in which Hofrath Voigt displayed the most various and comprehensive knowledge.

Goethe mentioned that he had received a letter, containing this objection to his system—that the cotyledons are not leaves, because they have no eyes behind them. But we satisfied ourselves, by examining various plants, that the cotyledons *have* eyes, as well as all the following leaves.

Voigt says the *aperçu* of the *Metamorphosis of Plants* is one of the most fruitful discoveries that researches into natural history have given to modern times.

We spoke of collections of stuffed birds; and Goethe told us how an Englishman kept several hundreds of living birds in large cages. Some of these died, and he had them stuffed. The stuffed birds pleased him so well, that he thought it would be better to kill them all and have them stuffed; and this whim he at once carried out.

Voigt mentioned that he was about to translate Cuvier's

Natural History and to publish it with some additions of his own.

After dinner, when Voigt had gone, Goethe showed me the manuscript of his *Walpurgisnacht*, and I was astonished to see to what a bulk it had grown.

Wednesday, March 3, 1830.

Went to walk with Goethe before dinner. He spoke favourably of my poem on the King of Bavaria, observing that Lord Byron had had a favourable influence upon me, but that I still lacked what is called *convenance*, in which Voltaire was so great; and he recommended me to take him as my model.

At table we talked of Wieland, particularly of his *Oberon*; and Goethe was of opinion that the foundation was weak, and that the plan had not been sufficiently thought over before the execution was begun. It was not well judged, he thought, to let a spirit procure the hairs and teeth, because the hero is thus left inactive. But the pregnant, graceful, ingenious treatment of this great poet, makes the book so attractive to the reader that he never thinks of the foundation, but reads on.

We continued talking till we came to the entelechy.

"The obstinacy of the individual, and the fact that man shakes off what does not suit him," said Goethe, "is a proof to me that something of the kind exists."

"Leibnitz," he continued, "had similar thoughts about independent beings, and indeed what we term an entelechy he called a monad."

Sunday, March 7, 1830.

Went to Goethe about twelve, and found him remarkably fresh and strong. He told me that he had been forced to lay aside the classical Walpurgis Night, to finish the last number.[1]

"I have shown my wisdom," said he, "in leaving off when I was in a good vein and had much to say that I had already invented. In this way, it is much easier to resume my subject than if I had gone on writing till I came to a standstill."

We had intended to take a drive before dinner, but we both found it so pleasant in the room that the horses were countermanded.

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[1] Of his entire works.—J. O.

Meanwhile, Frederick the servant had unpacked a large chest, arrived from Paris. It was a present from the sculptor David, of bas-relief portraits in plaster of fifty-seven celebrated persons. Frederick brought in the casts in the different drawers, and we were much amused in looking at all the persons of distinction. I was particularly curious about Mérimée; the head appeared as powerful and bold as his talent, and Goethe remarked that he had something humorous about him. Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Emile Deschamps, appeared with clear, free, cheerful faces. We were also pleased to see Mademoiselle Gay, Madame Tastu, and other young female writers. The powerful head of Fabvier reminded us of the men of earlier ages; we felt delight in looking at it again and again.

Thus we went on from one eminent person to another, Goethe saying repeatedly he could not sufficiently thank the admirable artist. He would not fail to show this collection to travellers, and in that way obtain verbal information about some of those personages who were unknown to him.

There had also been packed up in the chest some books, which he had ordered to be taken into the front rooms. We followed them, and sat down to dine. We were in good spirits, and spoke of works and plans of works.

"It is not good for man to be alone," said Goethe, "and especially to work alone. He needs sympathy and suggestion to do anything well. I owe to Schiller the *Achilleis*, and many of my ballads, to which he urged me; and you may take the credit to yourself if I complete the second part of *Faust*. I have often told you so before, but I must repeat it."

After dinner, Goethe opened one of the packets: it contained the poems of Emile Deschamps, accompanied by a letter. I saw with delight what influence was attributed to Goethe over the new life of French literature, and how the young poets loved and revered him as their intellectual head.

"You see there the spring-time of a beautiful mind," said Goethe.

We found also a leaf that David had sent, with drawings of Napoleon's hat in various positions.

"That is something for my son," said Goethe, and sent him the leaf immediately. Young Goethe soon came down full of glee, and declared that these hats of his hero were the *ne plus ultra* of his collection. Five minutes had not passed before the leaf, under glass and in a frame, was in its place among other emblems and mementoes of the hero.

(Sup.) Sunday, March 14, 1830.

This evening, at Goethe's, he showed me all the treasures, now put in order, from the chest he had received from David. The plaster medallions, with the profiles of the principal young poets of France, he had laid side by side upon tables. He spoke once more of the extraordinary talent of David, as great in conception as in execution. He showed me a number of the newest works, presented to him through the medium of David, as gifts from the most distinguished talents of the romantic school. I saw works by Sainte-Beuve, Ballanche, Victor Hugo, Balzac, Alfred de Vigny, Jules Janin, and others.

"David," said he, "has prepared happy days for me by this present. The young poets have already occupied me the whole week, and give me new life by the fresh impressions I get from them. I shall make a separate catalogue of these fine portraits and books, and give them both a special place in my art-collection and my library."

He then read something from the *Studies*, by Emile Deschamps. He praised the translation of the *Bride of Corinth*, as faithful, and very successful.

"I possess," said he, "the manuscript of an Italian translation of this poem; which gives the original, even to the rhymes."

The *Bride of Corinth* induced Goethe to speak of the rest of his ballads. "I owe them, in a great measure," said he, "to Schiller, who impelled me to them, because he always wanted something new for his *Horen*. I had carried them in my head for many years; they occupied my mind as pleasant images, beautiful dreams, which came and went and by playing with which my fancy made me happy. I unwillingly resolved to bid farewell to these brilliant visions, which had so long been my solace, by embodying them in poor inadequate words. When I saw them on paper, I regarded them with some sadness. I felt as if I were about to be separated for ever from a beloved friend.

"At other times, it has been totally different with my poems. They have been preceded by no impressions or forebodings, but have come suddenly upon me, and have insisted on being composed immediately, so that I have felt an instinctive and dreamy impulse to write them down on the spot. In such a somnambulistic condition, it has often happened that I have had a sheet of paper lying before me all aslant, and I have not discovered it till all has been written, or I have found no room to write any more. I have possessed many such sheets written diagonally; but they have been lost one after another, and I regret that I can no longer show any proofs of such poetic abstraction."

The conversation returned to French literature, and the modern ultra-romantic tendency of some not unimportant talents. Goethe was of opinion that this poetic revolution, still in its infancy, would be very favourable to literature, but very prejudicial to the individual authors who effect it.

"Extremes are never to be avoided in any revolution," said he. "In a political one, nothing is generally desired in the beginning but the abolition of abuses; but before people are aware, they are deep in bloodshed and horrors. Thus the French, in their present literary revolution, desired nothing at first but a freer form; however, they will not stop there, but will reject the traditional contents with the form. They begin to declare tedious the representation of noble sentiments and deeds, and attempt to treat of all sorts of abominations. Instead of the beautiful subjects from Grecian mythology, there are devils, witches, and vampires, and the lofty heroes of antiquity must give place to jugglers and galley slaves. This is piquant! This is effective! But after the public has once tasted this highly seasoned food and become accustomed to it, it will always long for more and stronger. A young man of talent, who would produce an effect and be acknowledged, and who is not great enough to go his own way, must accommodate himself to the taste of the day—nay, must seek to outdo his predecessors in the horrible and frightful. But in this chase after outward means of effect, all profound study, and all gradual and thorough development of the talent and the man from within, is neglected. And this is the greatest injury that can befall a talent, although literature in general will gain by this tendency of the moment."

"But how can an attempt that destroys individual talents be favourable to literature in general?"

"The extremes and excrescences I have described," said Goethe, "will gradually disappear; but at last this great advantage will remain—besides a freer form, richer and more diversified subjects will have been attained, and no object of the broadest world and the most manifold life will be any longer excluded as unpoetical. I compare the present literary epoch to a state of violent fever; which is not in itself good and desirable, but of which improved health is the happy consequence. That abomination that now often constitutes the whole subject of a poetical work will in future only appear as a useful expedient; aye, the pure and the noble, which is now abandoned for the moment, will soon be resought with additional ardour."

"It is surprising to me that even Mérimée, who is one of your favourites, has entered upon this ultra-romantic path, through the horrible subjects of his *Guzla*."

"Mérimée," replied Goethe, "has treated these things very differently from his fellow-authors. These poems certainly are not deficient in various horrible *motifs*—such as churchyards, nightly crossways, ghosts, and vampires; but the repulsive themes do not touch the intrinsic merit of the poet. He treats them from a certain objective distance, and, as it were, with irony. He goes to work with them like an artist, to whom it is an amusement to try anything of the sort. He has, as I have said before, quite renounced himself—he has even renounced the Frenchman; and that to such a degree, that at first these poems of *Guzla* were deemed real Illyrian popular poems, and thus little was wanting for the success of the imposition he had intended.

"Mérimée is a thorough fellow! More power and genius are required for the objective treatment of a subject than is generally supposed. Thus Lord Byron, notwithstanding his predominant personality, has sometimes had the power of renouncing himself altogether—as may be seen in some of his dramatic pieces, particularly in his *Marino Faliero*. In this piece we quite forget that Lord Byron, or even an Englishman, wrote it. We live entirely in Venice, and entirely in the time when the action takes place. The personages speak from themselves, and from their own condition, without having any of the subjective feelings, thoughts, and opinions of the poet. That is as it should be. Of our young French romantic writers of the exaggerating sort, nobody can say as much. What I have read of them—poems, novels, dramatic works—have all borne the personal colouring of the author; none of them ever make me forget that a Parisian—that a Frenchman—wrote them. Even in the treatment of foreign subjects we are still in France and Paris, quite absorbed in all the wishes, necessities, conflicts, and fermentations of the present day."

"Béranger also," I threw in experimentally, "has only expressed the situation of the great metropolis, and his own interior."

"Béranger," said Goethe, "is a nature most happily endowed, firmly grounded in himself, purely developed from himself, and quite in harmony with himself. He has never asked—what would suit the times? what produces an effect? what pleases? what are others doing?—in order that he might do the like. He has always worked only from the core of his own nature, without troubling himself what the public or this or that party expects. He has certainly, at different critical epochs, been influenced by the mood, wishes, and necessities of the people; but that has only confirmed him in himself, by proving to him that his own nature is in harmony with that of the people; it has never seduced him into expressing anything but what already lay in his heart.

"You know that on the whole I am no friend to what is called political poems, but such as Béranger has composed I can tolerate. With him there is nothing snatched out of the air, nothing of merely imagined or imaginary interest; he never shoots at random; he has always the most decided, the most important subjects. His affectionate admiration of Napoleon, and his reminiscences of the great warlike deeds performed under him, and that at a time when these recollections were a consolation to the somewhat oppressed French; his hatred of the domination of priests, and of the darkness that threatened to return with the Jesuits: these are things to which we cannot refuse hearty sympathy. And masterly is his treatment on all occasions! How he turns about and rounds off every subject in his own mind before he expresses it! And then, when all is matured, what wit, spirit, irony, and persiflage, and what heartiness, naïveté, and grace, are unfolded at every step! His songs have every year made millions of joyous men; they always flow glibly from the tongue, even with the working-classes; while they are so far elevated above the level of the commonplace, that the populace, in converse with these pleasant spirits, becomes accustomed and compelled to think itself better and nobler. What more would you have? and, altogether, what higher praise could be given to a poet?"

"He is excellent, unquestionably!" said I. "You know how I have loved him for years, and can imagine how it gratifies me to hear you speak of him thus. But if I must say which of his songs I prefer, his amatory poems please me more than his political, in which the references and allusions are not always clear to me."

"That happens to be your case," said Goethe; "the political poems were not written for you: but ask the French, and they will tell you what is good in them. On the whole, a political poem, in the most fortunate circumstances, is the organ of a single nation, and in most cases only of a certain party; but it is seized with enthusiasm by this nation and this party when it is good. Again, a political poem should always be looked upon as the mere result of a certain state of the times; which passes by, and with respect to succeeding times takes from the poem the value it derived from the subject. As for Béranger, his was no hard task. Paris is France. All the important interests of his great country are concentrated in the capital, and there have their proper life and their proper echo. Besides, in most of his political songs he is by no means to be regarded as the mere organ of a single party; the things he writes against are for the most part of so universal and national an interest that the poet is almost always heard as a great *voice* of the people. With us in Germany, such a thing is not possible. We have no city, nay we have no country, of which we could decidedly say—*Here is Germany!* If we inquire in Vienna, the answer is—This is Austria! and if in Berlin, the answer is—This is Prussia! Only when we tried to get rid of the French, sixteen years ago, was Germany everywhere. *Then* a political poet could have had a universal effect; but there was no need of one! The universal necessity, and the universal feeling of disgrace, had seized upon the nation like something dæmonic; the inspiring fire the poet might have kindled was already burning everywhere of its own accord. Still, I will not deny that Arndt, Körner, and Rückert, have had some effect."

"You have been reproached," remarked I, rather inconsiderately, "for not taking up arms at that great period, or at least co-operating as a poet."

"Let us leave that point alone, my good friend," returned Goethe. "It is an absurd world, which does not know what it wants, and which must be allowed to have its own way. How could I take up arms without hatred, and how could I hate without youth? [1] If such an emergency had befallen me when twenty years old, I should certainly not have been the last; but it found me as one who had already passed the first sixties.

"Besides, we cannot all serve our country in the same way; each does his best, as God has endowed him. I have toiled hard enough during half a century. I can say, that in those things which Nature has appointed for my daily work, I have permitted myself no repose or relaxation night or day; but have always striven, investigated, and done as much, and that as well, as I could. If everyone can say the same of himself, it will prove well with all."

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[1] This is about the funniest objection to military service ever offered. Yet the war record of kinema-drama reminds us that recognition of the need of artificial stimulus to hate was not confined to Goethe's country.

"The fact is," said I, by way of conciliation, "that you should not be vexed at that reproach, but should rather feel flattered at it. For what does it show, but that the opinion of the world concerning you is so great, that it desires that he who has done more for the culture of his nation than any other should at last do everything!"

"I will not say what I think," returned Goethe. "There is more ill-will towards me hidden beneath that remark than you are aware of. I feel therein a new form of the old hatred with which people have persecuted me and endeavoured quietly to wound me for years. I know very well that I am an eyesore to many; that they would all willingly get rid of me; and that, since they cannot touch my talent, they aim at my character. Now, it is said, I am proud; now, egotistical; now, full of envy towards young talents; now, immersed in sensuality; now, without Christianity; and now, without love for my native country, and my own dear Germans. You have now known me well for years, and you feel what all that talk is worth. But if you would learn what I have suffered, read my *Xenien*; and it will be clear to you, from my retorts, how people have from time to time sought to embitter my life.

"A German author is a German martyr! Yes, my friend, you will not find it otherwise! And I myself can scarcely complain; none of the others have fared better—most have fared worse; and in England and France it is quite the same as with us. What did not Molière suffer? What Rousseau and Voltaire? Byron was driven from England by evil tongues; and would have fled to the end of the world, if an early death had not delivered him from the Philistines and their hatred.

"And if it were only the narrow-minded masses that persecuted noble men! But no! one gifted man and one talent persecutes another; Platen scandalizes Heine, and Heine Platen, and each seeks to make the other hateful; while the world is wide enough for all to live and to let live; and everyone has an enemy in his own talent, which gives him quite enough to do.

"To write military songs, and sit in a room! That forsooth was my duty! To have written them in the bivouac, when the horses at the enemy's outposts are heard neighing at night, would have been well enough; however, that was not my life and not my business, but that of Theodore Körner. His war-songs suit him perfectly. But to me, who am not of a warlike nature, and who have no warlike sense, war-songs would have been a mask fitting my face very badly.

"I have never affected anything in my poetry. I have never uttered anything I have not experienced, which has not urged me to production. I have only composed love-songs when I have loved. How could I write songs of hatred without hating! And, between ourselves, I did not hate the French, although I thanked God that we were free from them. How could I, to whom culture and barbarism alone are of importance, hate a nation that is among the most cultivated of the earth, to which I owe so great a part of my own cultivation?

"Altogether," continued Goethe, "national hatred is something peculiar. You will always find it strongest and most violent where there is the lowest degree of culture. But there is a degree where it vanishes altogether, and where a person stands to a certain extent *above* nations, and feels the weal or woe of a neighbouring people as if it had happened to his own. This degree of culture was conformable to my nature,[1] and I had become strengthened in it long before I had reached my sixtieth year."

(Sup.) Monday, March 15, 1830.

This evening, passed a short hour at Goethe's. He spoke a great deal of Jena, and of the arrangements and improvements he had made in the different branches of the University. For chemistry, botany, and mineralogy, formerly treated only so far as they belonged to pharmacy, he had introduced special chairs. Above all, he had done much good for the museum of natural history and the library. He again related to me, with much self-satisfaction and good humour, the history of his violent seizure of a room adjoining the library, of which the medical faculty had taken possession, and which they would not give up.

"The library," said he, "was in very bad condition. The situation was damp and close, and by no means fit to contain its treasures; particularly as, through the purchase of the Büttner library on the part of the Grand Duke, thirteen thousand additional volumes lay in large heaps upon the floor. An addition should have been made to the building, but for this the means were wanting; besides, this addition could easily be avoided, since adjoining the library there was a large room standing empty, and well calculated to supply all our necessities. However, this room was not in possession of the library; but was occupied by the medical faculty, who sometimes used it for conferences. I therefore applied to these gentlemen, civilly requesting that they would give up this room to me for the library. They would not agree. They said they were willing to give it up if I would have a new room built for their conferences, and that immediately. I replied that I should be very ready to have another place prepared for them but could not promise them a new building immediately. This answer did not appear to satisfy; for when I sent the next morning for the key, I was told that it could not be found!

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[1] A statement that, however true, completely justifies the "persecutors" he complained of. Goethe seems to have desired credit both for being patriotic and for being superior to patriotism.

"There now remained no other course but to enter as conqueror. I sent for a bricklayer, and took him into the library, to the wall of the said adjoining room. 'This wall, my friend,' said I, 'must be very thick, for it separates two different parts of the dwelling: just try how strong it is.' The bricklayer went to work, and scarcely had he given five or six hearty blows, when bricks and mortar fell in, and we could see, through the opening, some venerable [1] perukes with which the room had been decorated. 'Go on, my friend,' said I; 'I cannot see clearly enough yet. Act just as if you were in your own house.' This friendly encouragement so animated the bricklayer, that the opening was soon large enough to serve for a door; when my library attendants rushed into the room, each with an armful of books, which they threw upon the ground as a sign of possession.

"Benches, chairs, and desks vanished in a moment; and my assistants were so quick and active, that in a few days all the books were arranged in the most beautiful order along the walls of their repository. The doctors, who soon afterwards entered their room, *in corpore*, through their usual door, were confounded by the great and unexpected change. They did not know what to say, and retired in silence; but they all harboured a secret grudge against me. Still, when I see them singly, and particularly when I have any one of them to dine with me, they are quite charming, and my very dear friends. When I related to the Grand Duke the course of this adventure, which was certainly achieved with his consent and perfect approbation, it amused him right royally, and we have very often laughed at it since.

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[1] Houben's reissue of the *Gespräche* (Leipzig, 1925) notes a printer's omission here. The phrase ought to be "some venerable portraits of old perukes."

"We had our share of trouble in doing good. Afterwards, when, on account of the great dampness in the library, I wished to take down and remove the whole of the old city-wall, which was quite useless, I found no better success. My entreaties, good reasons, and rational representations, found no hearing, and I was at last obliged here also to go to work as a conqueror. When the city authorities saw my workmen at work upon their old wall, they sent a deputation to the Grand Duke, who was then at Dornburg, with the humble request that his highness would be pleased, by a word of command, to check my violent destruction of their venerable city-wall. But the Grand Duke, who had secretly authorized me to take this step, answered very wisely—'I do not intermeddle with Goethe's affairs. He knows what he has to do, and must act as he thinks right. Go to him, and speak to him yourself, if you have the courage!'

"However, nobody made his appearance at my house," continued Goethe, laughing; "I went on pulling down as much of the old wall as was in my way, and had the happiness of seeing my library dry at last."

Tuesday, March 16, 1830.

This morning Herr von Goethe paid me a visit, and informed me his long-contemplated tour to Italy had been decided on; his father had allowed the necessary money; and he wished me to accompany him. We were both highly pleased, and talked a great deal about our preparations.

When I passed Goethe's house at noon, Goethe beckoned me at the window, and I hastened up to him. He was in the front apartments, and began to talk about his son's tour; saying that he approved of it, thought it very rational, and was glad that I would accompany him.

"It will be a good thing for you both," said he, "and your cultivation in particular will receive no small advantage."

He then showed me a Christ with twelve Apostles, and we talked of the poverty of these forms as subjects for sculpture.

"One Apostle," said Goethe, "is always much like another, and very few have enough life and action connected with them to give them character and significance. I have amused myself with making a cycle of twelve biblical figures, in which every one is significant and distinct from the rest and therefore a grateful subject for the artist.

"First comes Adam—the most beautiful of men, as perfect as can be imagined. He may have his hand upon a spade, as a symbol that man is to till the earth.

"Next Noah, with whom a new creation begins. He cultivates the vine, and therefore this figure may have something of the character of the Indian Bacchus.

"Next Moses, as the first lawgiver.

"Then David, as warrior and king.

"Next to him, Isaiah as prince and prophet.

"Then Daniel, who points to the *future* Christ.

"Christ.

"Next to him John, who loves the *present* Christ. Thus Christ would be placed between two youthful figures; one of whom, viz. Daniel, should be painted with a mild expression and long hair, while the other should be impassioned and with short curly hair. But who shall come after John?

"The Captain of Capernaum, as a representation of the faithful who expect immediate aid.

"Then the Magdalen, as a symbol of penitent man urging forgiveness and eager for reformation. In these two figures the idea of Christianity would be contained.

"Then there may follow Paul, who most vigorously propagated the new doctrine.

"After him James, who went to the remotest nations, and represents missionaries.

"Peter would conclude the whole. The artist should place him near the door, giving him an expression as if he examined those who entered, to see whether they were worthy to tread the sanctuary.

"What do you say to this cycle? I think it would be richer than that of the twelve Apostles, where all look like each other. Moses and the Magdalen I would represent sitting."

I requested Goethe to write it down, which he promised to do. "I will think it over again," he said, "and then give it with other new things for the thirty-ninth volume."

Wednesday, March 17, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. I asked him respecting a passage in his poems, whether it should be read, "As thy priest Horace in his rapture promised," as it stands in all the older editions—or, "As thy priest Propertius," etc., as it stands in the new edition.

"I allowed myself," said Goethe, "to be seduced by Göttling into this last reading. 'Priest Propertius' sounds badly, and therefore I am for the earlier reading."

"In the manuscript of your *Helena*," said I, "it was written that Theseus carries her off as a slim roe of *ten* years. In consequence of Göttling's suggestions, you have printed, 'a slim roe of *seven* years'; which is too young both for the beautiful girl herself, and for the twin-brothers Castor and Pollux, who rescue her. Mythology is so pliant, that we may use things just as we find most convenient."

"You are right," said Goethe; "I also am in favour of her being ten years old when Theseus carries her off, and hence I have written afterwards, 'From her *tenth* year she has been good for naught.' In the future edition you may again make the roe of seven years into one of ten."

After dinner Goethe showed me two new numbers by Neureuther, after his ballads; and we admired above everything the free cheerful mind of this amiable artist.

Sunday, March 21, 1830.

Dined with Goethe. He spoke first about his son's journey, saying we ought not to have illusions as to the result.

"People usually come back as they have gone away," said he; "indeed, we must take care not to return with thoughts that unfit us for after-life. Thus, I brought from Italy the idea of fine staircases, and have consequently spoiled my house, making the rooms all smaller than they should have been. The most important thing is to learn to rule oneself. If I allowed myself to go on unchecked, I could easily ruin myself and all about me."

We talked then about ill health, and the interplay of body and mind.

"It is incredible," said Goethe, "how much the mind can do to sustain the body. I suffer often from a disordered state of the bowels; but my will, and the strength of the upper part of my body, keep me up. The mind must not yield to the body. I work more easily when the barometer is high than when it is low: so I endeavour, when the barometer is low, to counteract the injurious effect by great exertion—and my attempt is successful."

"But there are in poetry things that cannot be forced; we must await favourable hours to give us what we cannot get by mental determination. Thus I now take my time with my

Walpurgis Night, that there may be the proper strength and grace throughout. I have advanced a good way, and hope to finish it before your departure.

"Everything in it derived from pique, I have so separated from the particular circumstances, and made so general, that, though the reader has no want of allusions, he cannot tell what they are really aimed at. I have, however, endeavoured to mark out everything in distinct outline, in the antique style, so that there may be nothing vague or undecided—which might suit the romantic style well enough.

"The distinction between classical and romantic poetry, which is now spread over the whole world and occasions so many quarrels and divisions, came originally from Schiller and myself. I laid down the maxim of objective treatment in poetry, and would allow no other; but Schiller, who worked quite in the subjective way, deemed his own fashion right, and to defend himself against me, wrote the treatise upon *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*. He proved to me that I, against my will, was romantic, and that my *Iphigenia*, through the predominance of sentiment, was by no means so classical and so much in the antique spirit as some people supposed.

"The Schlegels took up this idea, and carried it further, so that it has now been diffused over the whole world; and everybody talks about classicism and romanticism—of which nobody thought fifty years ago."

I turned the conversation again upon the cycle of the twelve figures, and Goethe made some explanatory remarks.

"Adam must be represented as I have said—but not quite naked, because I best conceive him after the Fall; he should be clothed with a thin deer-skin; and, at the same time, in order to express that he is the father of the human race, it would be well to place by him his eldest son, a fearless boy, looking boldly about him—a little Hercules stifling a snake in his hand.

"And I have had another thought about Noah, which pleases me better than the first. I would not have him like an Indian Bacchus; I would represent him as a vintager: this would give the notion of a redeemer, who, as the first fosterer of the vine, made man free from the torment of care and affliction."

Goethe then showed me the engraving of Neureuther, for his legend of the horseshoe.

"The artist," said I, "has given the Saviour only eight disciples."

"And even these eight," replied Goethe, "are too many; and he has very wisely endeavoured to divide them into two groups, and thus to avoid the monotony of an unmeaning procession."

Wednesday, March 24, 1830.

The liveliest conversation at table to-day with Goethe. He told me about a French poem which had come in manuscript, in the collection of David, under the title *Le Rire de Mirabeau.*

"The poem is full of spirit and boldness," said Goethe, "and you must see it. It seems as if Mephistopheles had prepared the ink for the poet. It is great if he wrote it without having read *Faust*, and no less great if he had read it."

(Sup.) Monday, March 29, 1830.

This evening for some moments at Goethe's. I found him between his grandson Wolf and the Countess Caroline Egloffstein, his intimate friend. Wolf gave his dear grandfather a great deal of trouble. He climbed about him, and sat now upon one shoulder, and now upon another. Goethe bore all with the utmost gentleness, inconvenient as the weight of this boy of ten must have been to so old a man.

"But, dear Wolf," said the Countess, "do not torment your good grandfather so terribly! He must be quite tired with your weight."

"That doesn't matter!" said Wolf, "we shall soon go to bed, and then grandfather will have time to recover."

"You see," rejoined Goethe, "that love is always somewhat impertinent."

The conversation turned upon Campe, and his writings for children.

"I have met Campe only twice," said Goethe. "After forty years, I saw him at Carlsbad. I then found him very old, withered, stiff, and formal. He had, during a long life, written only for children—not even for great children of twenty. He could not endure me. I was an eyesore, a stumbling-block, and he did all he could to avoid me. Chance, however, one day brought me to him unexpectedly; and he could not help saying some words to me. 'I have,' said he, 'great respect for the capabilities of your mind! You have attained extraordinary eminence in various departments. But things of that sort do not affect me, and I cannot set the value upon them that others do.' This rather uncivil candour by no means offended me, and I said all sorts of obliging things in return. Besides, I really have a high opinion of Campe. He has conferred incredible benefits upon children; he is their delight, and, so to speak, their gospel. I should like to see him a little corrected—merely on account of two or three terrible stories he has had the indiscretion not only to write but also to introduce into his collection for children. Why should we burden the cheerful, fresh, innocent fancy of children with such horrors?"

(Sup.) Monday, April 5, 1830.

It is well known that Goethe is no friend to spectacles.

"It may be a mere whim of mine," said he, on various occasions, "but I cannot overcome it. Whenever a stranger steps up to me with spectacles on his nose, a discordant feeling comes over me, which I cannot master. It annoys me so much, that on the very threshold it takes away a great part of my benevolence, and so spoils my thoughts, that unconstrained natural play of my own nature is impossible. It ever gives me the impression of the *Discourteous*, as if a stranger would say something rude to me at the first greeting. I feel this still stronger, since it has been impressed upon me for years how obnoxious spectacles are. If a stranger now comes with spectacles, I think immediately, 'He has not read my latest poems!' and that is of itself a little to his disadvantage; or 'He has read them, knows their peculiarity, and sets them at naught,' and that is still worse. The only man with whom spectacles do not annoy me, is Zelter; with all others they are horrible. It always seems to me as if I am to serve strangers as an object for strict examination, and as if with their armed glances they would penetrate my most secret thoughts and spy out every wrinkle of my old face. But while they thus endeavour to make my acquaintance, they destroy all fair equality between us, as they prevent me from compensating myself by making theirs. For what do I gain from a man into whose eyes I cannot look when he is speaking, and the mirror of whose soul is veiled by glasses that dazzle me?"

"Someone has remarked," added I, "that wearing spectacles makes men conceited, because spectacles raise them to a degree of sense-perfection which is far above the power of their own nature, but through which at last creeps in the delusion that this artificial eminence is the force of their own nature after all."

"The remark is very good," returned Goethe, "it appears to have proceeded from a scientist. However, it is not tenable. For if this were actually the case, all blind men would of necessity be very modest; and, on the other hand, all endowed with excellent eyes would be conceited. But this is not the case; we rather find that all men endowed mentally and bodily are the most modest, while all who have some peculiar mental defect think a great deal more of themselves. It appears that bountiful Nature has given, to all those whom she has not enough endowed in higher respects, imagination and presumption by way of compensation and complement.

"Besides, modesty and presumption are moral things, of so spiritual a nature that they have little to do with the body. With narrow-minded persons, and those in a state of mental darkness, we find conceit; while with mental clearness and high endowments we never find it. In such cases there is generally a joyful feeling of strength; but since this strength is actual, the feeling is anything else you please, only not conceit."

We still conversed on various other subjects, and came at last to the *Chaos*—the Weimar journal conducted by Frau von Goethe—in which not only the German gentlemen and ladies of the place take part, but also the young English, French, and other foreigners who reside here; so that almost every number presents a mixture of nearly all the best-known European tongues.

"It was a good thought of my daughter," said Goethe, "and she should be praised and thanked for having achieved this highly original journal, and kept the individual members of our society in such activity that it has now lasted nearly a year. It is certainly only a dilettante pastime, and I know very well that nothing great and durable will proceed from it; but still it is very neat, and to a certain extent a mirror of the intellectual eminence of our present Weimar society. Then (the principal thing) it gives employment to our young gentlemen and ladies, who often do not know what to do with themselves; through this too they have an intellectual centre which affords them subjects for discussion and conversation and preserves them from mere empty hollow chat. I read every sheet just as it comes from the press; and on the whole I have met with nothing stupid, but occasionally something very pretty. What, for instance, could you say against the elegy by Frau von Bechtolsheim upon the death of the Grand Duchess Dowager? Is not the poem very pretty? The only thing that could be said against it, or indeed against most that is written by our young ladies and gentlemen, is, that (like trees too full of sap, which have a number of parasitical shoots) they have a superabundance of thoughts and feelings which they cannot control, so that they often do not know how to restrain themselves or to leave off in the right place. This is so with Frau von Bechtolsheim. In order to preserve a rhyme, she had added another line, which was completely detrimental to the poem, and in some measure spoiled it. I saw this fault in the manuscript, and was able to strike it out in time.

"It takes an old practitioner," he added, laughing, "to understand striking out. Schiller was particularly great in that. I once saw him, on the occasion of his *Musenalmanach*, reduce a pompous poem of *two-and-twenty* strophes to *seven*; and no loss resulted from this terrible operation. Those seven strophes contained all the good and effective thoughts."

Wednesday, April 21, 1830.

To-day I took my leave of Goethe, as I was to set out with his son for Italy to-morrow morning. We said a great deal in reference to the journey; and he especially recommended me to observe well, and now and then to write to him.

I felt some emotion at leaving Goethe, but was consoled by his strong healthy appearance and the confident hope that I should see him again.

When I took my departure he gave me an album, in which he had written these words:

TO THE TRAVELLERS

Es geht vorüber eh' ich's gewahr werde,
Und verwandelt sich eh' ich's merke.—Job.[1]

Weimar, 21st April, 1830.

[Here Eckermann inserts an account, by way of journal, of his travels. He was at Frankfort on the 24th and 25th of April. At Milan, on the 28th of May, he writes: "I have now been here for three weeks." From Geneva on the 12th of September he wrote to Goethe: it appears that from Milan the two travellers paid a visit to Venice; and that, on their return to Milan, Eckermann had a fever. On his recovery they went to Genoa; where, as previously arranged, they parted—young Goethe going to Leghorn, and Eckermann to Turin: this on the 25th of July. Eckermann crossed the Alps at Mont Cenis on the 2nd of August, to Chambéry; on the 7th he was at Aix; and late on the 8th, amid rain and darkness, he reached Geneva and put up at the "Crown."]

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[1] "Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not."—Job.—J. O.

This inn was thronged with Englishmen; who, having just come from Paris, and having been eye-witnesses of the extraordinary scenes that had taken place there,[1] had a great deal to tell. You may imagine what an effect the first experience of these world-shaking events had upon me—with what interest I read the newspapers, which had been suppressed in Piedmont; and how eagerly I listened to the narratives of the new-comers who arrived every day, and to the gossip and disputes of the politicians at the *table d'hôte.* Everybody was in a state of the greatest excitement, and an endeavour was made to trace the consequences that might result to the rest of Europe from such violent measures. I visited our fair friend Sylvester, and Soret's parents and brother.

[On the 15th of August he heard from his friend Sterling, who was at Geneva, that young Goethe had, through a carriage accident, broken his collar-bone the very day he parted from Eckermann. On the 28th, however, he had reassuring news.—The rest of his letter is about himself and his decision not to return to Weimar because he wished to busy himself writing out the Conversations, etc., and feared distraction.

On the 14th of September he writes again from Geneva, in answer to a letter from Goethe. He says:]

The Rhone, as it narrows itself to pass through Geneva, divides itself into two arms, which are crossed by four bridges, from which the colour of the water may be well observed by all who are coming or going.

Now it is remarkable that one arm is blue—as was perceived by Byron, while the other is green. The arm in which the water appears blue flows more rapidly, and has so deep a channel that no light can penetrate it, consequently there is perfect darkness below. The very clear water acts as a dense medium, and from our well-known laws the finest blue is produced. The water of the other arm is not so deep, the light reaches the bottom, so that we see the pebbles; and as it is not dark enough to become blue, but at the same time is not smooth, and the ground is not sufficiently pure, white, and shining, to be yellow, the colour remains between the two extremes, and appears green.

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[1] The "Revolution of July"—which had resulted in the deposition of Charles X of France and the proclamation of Louis-Philippe as King *of the French.* When the news of this reached Weimar on 2nd August, Soret called upon Goethe, who asked him what he thought "of the great event." Soret assumed that the Revolution was referred to; but it appeared that Goethe meant a contest between two scientists, Cuvier and Saint-Hilaire.

If, like Byron, I had a taste for mad pranks, and the means to play them off, I would make the following experiment:

In the green arm of the Rhone, near the bridge, where people pass by thousands every day, I would fasten a large black board, or something of the kind, so far below the surface that a pure blue would be produced; and, not far from this, a very large piece of white shining tin, at such a depth that a clouded yellow would appear in the sunshine. When the people as they passed saw the yellow and blue spots in the green water, they would be teased by a riddle, which they would not be able to solve. All sorts of pleasantries occur to travellers; but this seems to me good of its kind—there is some sense in it, and it might be of some use.

[On the 21st of September he left Geneva for Berne; and after two days there he went to Strasburg.]

Here, as I passed a hairdresser's window, I saw a small bust of Napoleon, which, viewed from the street against the darkness of the room, exhibited all the gradations of blue, from a pale milky hue to a deep violet. I suspected that this bust, seen from the interior of the room against the light, would exhibit all the gradations of yellow; and I could not resist the impulse of the moment to rush into the house, though the owners were unknown to me.

My first glance was at the bust, which to my great delight shone upon me with the most brilliant colours on the *active* side from the palest yellow to a dark ruby-red. I asked eagerly whether it was not to be disposed of. The master replied that, from a similar respect for the Emperor, he had lately brought it from Paris; but that since my affection seemed, from my enthusiastic joy, greatly to exceed his own, the right of possession belonged to me.

[He sent the image to Goethe.]

Afterwards, at Frankfort, I received the following letters:

FIRST LETTER

I write to tell you as briefly as possible that both your letters from Geneva arrived safe, though not before the 26th of September. I have only to say in haste—remain in Frankfort till we have thoroughly considered how you are to pass next winter.

I enclose a letter for Herr Geheimrath von Willemer and his lady, which you will be kind enough to deliver as soon as possible. You will find in them two friends, who are united with me in the fullest sense, and will render your abode at Frankfort useful and agreeable.

So much for the present. Write to me as soon as you have received this letter.

Yours faithfully,
GOETHE.

Weimar, 26th September, 1830.

SECOND LETTER

I send you the heartiest greetings, my dearest friend in my native city, and hope that you will have passed the few days there in social enjoyments with my excellent friends. If you wish to go to Nordheim, and to remain there for a short time, I have nothing to object. If you intend in your quiet hours to occupy yourself with the manuscript that is in Soret's hands, I shall be all the better pleased, as I do not wish it to be published soon, but shall be glad to go through it with you and correct it. Its value will be increased if I can attest that it is conceived perfectly in my spirit. More I do not say, but leave the rest to yourself, and expect to hear further. Of your other friends I have not spoken to one since the receipt of your letter.

Your hearty well-wisher,
J. W. VON GOETHE.

Weimar, 12th October ,1830.

THIRD LETTER

The lively impression which you received from the remarkable bust, and the colours it produced—the desire to obtain it—the pleasant adventure you achieved on that account, and the kind thought of making me a present of it,—all this shows how thoroughly you are penetrated with the grand primitive phenomenon which here appears thoroughly revealed. This idea—this feeling, with all its fruitfulness, will accompany you through your whole life, and will manifest itself in various productive ways. Error belongs to libraries, truth to the human mind—books may be increased by books, while the intercourse with living primitive laws gratifies the mind that can embrace the simple, disentangle the perplexed, and enlighten the obscure.

If your Dæmon again brings you to Weimar, you shall see the image standing in a strong clear sun, where beneath the calm blue of the transparent face the thick mass of the breast and the epaulettes go through the ascending and descending scale of every shade from the strongest ruby-red. As the granite head of Memnon utters sounds, so does this glass figure produce a coloured halo. Here we see the hero victorious even for the Theory of Colours. Receive my warmest thanks for this unexpected confirmation of a doctrine I have so much at heart.

With your medal, too, you have doubly and trebly enriched my cabinet. My attention has been called to a man called Dupré, an excellent sculptor, brassfounder, and medallist. He it was who modelled and cast the likeness of Henry IV on the Pont-Neuf. Being stimulated by the medal you sent me, I looked over the rest of my collection, and found some very excellent ones of the same name, and others probably by the same hand, so that your gift has afforded me a pleasant impulse.

As for my *Metamorphosis* with Soret's translation, we have only reached the fifth sheet, and I long doubted whether I should curse or bless this undertaking, but now I again find myself forced back to the contemplation of organic nature; I am pleased, and willingly pursue my task. The maxims I have entertained for forty years are still valid—they serve as guide through the whole labyrinth of the comprehensible to the very limit of the incomprehensible, where, after much profit, one may reasonably stop. No philosopher of the old or new world has been able to reach any further. More can scarcely be said in writing.

J. W. VON GOETHE.

During my stay at Nordheim, which I did not reach till the end of October, having stopped some time at Frankfort and Cassel, every circumstance combined to make my return to Weimar desirable.

Goethe had not approved of a speedy publication of my *Conversations*, hence a successful opening of a purely literary career was not to be thought of.

Then the sight of her whom I had ardently loved for many years, and the feeling of her great qualities, which was every day renewed, excited in me the desire of a speedy union, and the wish for a secure subsistence.

Under these circumstances I received a message from Weimar, by order of the Grand Duchess, and hailed it with delight, as may be seen by the following letter to Goethe:

[The letter announced that he had changed his mind about not returning to Weimar, and had accepted an offer, from the Grand Duchess, of the post of tutor to the young Prince.]

On the afternoon of the 20th of November I left Nordheim, and set off for Göttingen, which I reached at dusk.

In the evening, at the *table d'hôte*, when the landlord heard that I had come from Weimar and was on my way back, he calmly told me that the great poet Goethe had had to undergo a severe misfortune in his old age, since, according to the papers of the day, his only son had died of paralysis, in Italy.

I passed a sleepless night. The event which affected me so nearly was constantly before my eyes. The following days and nights, which I passed on the road, and in Mühlhausen and Gotha, were no better. Being alone in the carriage, under the influence of the gloomy November days, and in desert fields, where there was no external object to distract my attention or to cheer me, I in vain endeavoured to fix upon other thoughts. While among the people at the inns, I constantly heard of the mournful event which so nearly affected myself, as one of the novelties of the day.

I reached the last station before Weimar, on Tuesday, the 23rd of November, at six o'clock in the evening.

I just greeted the people at my residence, and then set off at once for Goethe's house. I first went to Frau von Goethe. I found her already in mourning, but calm and collected, and we had a great deal to say to each other.

Thursday, November 25, 1830.

This morning Goethe sent me some books, which had arrived as presents for me from English and German authors.

At noon I went to dine with him. I found him looking at a portfolio of engravings and drawings, which had been offered him for sale. He told me he had had the pleasure that morning of a visit from the Grand Duchess, to whom he had mentioned my return.

Frau von Goethe joined us, and we sat down to dinner. I was obliged to give an account of my travels. I spoke of Venice, Milan, Genoa; and he seemed particularly interested about the family of the English consul there. I then spoke of Geneva; and he asked with sympathy after the Soret family, and Herr von Bonstetten. He wished for a particular description of the latter, which I gave him as well as I could.

After dinner, I was pleased that Goethe began to speak of my *Conversations*.

"It must be your first work," said he; "and we will not let it go till the whole is complete, and in order."

Still, Goethe appeared to me unusually silent to-day, and often lost in thought, which I feared was no good sign.

Tuesday, November 30, 1830.

Last Friday, we were thrown into no small anxiety. Goethe was seized with a violent hæmorrhage in the night, and was near death all the day. He lost, counting the vein they opened, six pounds of blood, which is a great quantity, considering that he is eighty years old. However, the great skill of his physician, Hofrath Vogel, and his incomparable constitution, have saved him this time; so that he recovers rapidly, has once more an excellent appetite, and sleeps again all night. Nobody is admitted, and he is forbidden to speak; but his ever active mind cannot rest; he is already thinking of his work. This morning, I received from him the following note, written in bed, with a lead pencil:

"Have the goodness, my best doctor, to look once again at the accompanying poems, with which you are familiar, and to rearrange the others which are new, so as to adapt them to their place in the whole. *Faust* shall presently follow.

"In hope of a happy meeting,

"GOETHE.

"Weimar, 30th November, 1830."

On Goethe's complete recovery, which soon followed, he devoted his whole attention to the first act of *Faust*, and to completion of the fourth volume of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*.

He wished me to examine his short unpublished papers, and to look through his journals and letters, that we might know how to proceed with the new edition.

1831

[The entry for January 1 consists entirely of particulars of Eckermann's scheme for the publication of Goethe's correspondence.]

To-day, after dinner, I discussed this matter with Goethe, point by point, and he gave his assent to my suggestions. "In my will," said he, "I will appoint you editor of these papers, and thus show that we have perfectly agreed as to the method to be observed."

Wednesday, February 9, 1831.

Yesterday I continued reading Voss's *Luise* with the Prince, and made to myself several remarks on the subject of that book.

[These were to the effect that, compared with *The Vicar of Wakefield* (to which it bore resemblance), the poem showed a narrow outlook; and that the hexameter was too pretentious for the subject.]

To-day, at dinner, I talked over this point with Goethe. "The earlier editions of the poem," said he, "are far better in that respect, and I remember that I read it aloud with pleasure. Afterwards Voss touched it up a great deal, and, from his technical crotchets, spoiled the ease and nature of the verse. Indeed, nowadays technicalities are everything, and the critics begin to torment themselves—whether in a rhyme an s should be followed by an s, and not an s by a 'double s.' If I were young and bold enough, I would purposely offend against all these technical whims; I would employ alliteration, assonance, false rhyme, and anything else that came into my head, but I would keep the main point in view, and endeavour to say such good things that everybody would be tempted to read them and to learn them by heart."

Friday, February 11, 1831.

To-day, at dinner, Goethe told me he had begun the fourth act of *Faust*, and thus intended to proceed, which pleased me highly. He then spoke with great praise of Carl Schöne, a young philologist of Leipzig, who had written a work on the costumes in the tragedies of Euripides, and who, notwithstanding his great learning, had displayed no more of it than was necessary for his purpose.

"I like to see," said Goethe, "how, with a productive sense, he goes to the point at once, while other modern philologists give themselves far too much trouble about technicalities and long and short syllables.

"It is always a sign that a time is unproductive when it goes so much into technical minutiæ; and thus also it is a sign that an individual is unproductive when he occupies himself in a like manner.

"Then there are other faults that act as impediments. Thus, in Count Platen there are nearly all the chief requisites of a good poet—imagination, invention, intellect, and productiveness, he possesses in a high degree; he also shows a thoroughly technical cultivation, and a study and earnestness, to be found in few others. With him, however, his unhappy polemical tendency is a hindrance.

"That amid the grandeur of Naples and Rome he could not forget the miserable trivialities of German literature, is unpardonable in so eminent a talent. The *Romantic Œdipus* shows that, especially with regard to technicalities, Platen was just the man to write the best German tragedy; but as, in this piece, he has used the tragic *motifs* for purposes of parody, how will he write a tragedy in good earnest?

"And then (what is not enough kept in mind) these quarrels occupy the thoughts; the images of our foes are like ghosts that intercept all free production and cause great disorder in a nature already sufficiently susceptible. Lord Byron was ruined by his polemic tendency; and Platen should, for the honour of German literature, quit for ever so unprofitable a path."

Saturday, February 12, 1831.

I have been reading the New Testament, and thinking of a picture Goethe lately showed me: Christ walking on the water, and Peter coming towards him on the waves and beginning to sink in a moment of faint-heartedness.

"This," said Goethe, "is one of the most beautiful legends, and one I love better than any. It expresses the noble doctrine that man, through faith and hearty courage, will come off victor in the most difficult enterprises, while he may be ruined by the least paroxysm of doubt."

Sunday, February 13, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. He told me he was going on with the fourth act of *Faust*, and had satisfied himself with the beginning.

"I had," said he, "long since the *what*, as you know, but was not quite satisfied about the *how*; hence it is the more pleasant that good thoughts have come to me.

"I will now go on inventing, to supply the whole gap, from the *Helena* to the fifth act, which is finished, and will write down a detailed plan, that I may work with comfort and security on those parts that first attract me.

"This act acquires quite a peculiar character, so that, like an independent little world, it does not touch the rest, and is only connected with the whole by a slight reference to what precedes and follows."

"It will then," said I, "be perfectly in character with the rest; for, in fact, Auerbach's cellar, the witches' kitchen, the Blocksberg, the Imperial Diet, the masquerade, the paper-money, the laboratory, the classical Walpurgis Night, the *Helena*, are all of them little independent worlds, which, each being complete in itself, do indeed work upon each other, yet come but little in contact. The great point with the poet is to express a manifold world, and he uses the story of a celebrated hero merely as a sort of thread on which he may string what he pleases. This is the case with *Gil Blas* and the *Odyssey*.

"You are perfectly right," said Goethe; "and the only matter of importance is, that the single masses should be clear and significant, while the whole always remains incommensurable—and even on that account, like an unsolved problem, constantly lures mankind to study it again and again."

I then spoke of a letter from a young soldier, whom I and other friends had advised to go into foreign service, and who now, not being pleased with his situation abroad, blames all those who advised him.

"Advice is a strange matter," said Goethe; "and looking about the world long enough to see how the most judicious enterprises fail and the most absurd often succeed, breeds disinclination to give advice to anybody. At bottom, too, there is a confinement with respect to him who asks advice, and a presumption in him who gives it. A person should only give advice in matters where he will co-operate. If anybody asks me for good advice, I say I am ready to give it, but only on condition that he will promise me not to take it."

The conversation turned on the New Testament, and I mentioned that I had been reading again the passage where Christ walks on the sea, and Peter meets him.

"When a person has not for some time read the Evangelists," said I, "he is always astonished at the moral grandeur of the figures. We find in the lofty demands made upon our moral power of will a sort of categorical imperative."

"Especially," said Goethe, "you find the categorical imperative of faith; which, indeed, Mohammed carried still further."

"Altogether," said I, "the Evangelists, if you look closely into them, are full of differences and contradictions; and the books must have gone through strange revolutions of destiny before they were brought together in the form in which we have them now."

"It is like trying to drink out a sea," said Goethe, "to enter into a historical and critical examination of them. It is the best way, without further ado, to adhere to that which is set down, and to appropriate so much as can be used for moral strengthening and culture. However, it is pleasant to get a clear notion of the localities, and I can recommend to you nothing better than Röhr's admirable book on Palestine. The late Grand Duke was so pleased with this book, that he bought it twice, giving the first copy to the library, after he had read it, and keeping the other always by him."

I wondered that the Grand Duke should take an interest in such matters.

"Therein," said Goethe, "he was great. He was interested in everything of any importance, in whatever department. He was always progressive, and sought to domesticate with himself all the good inventions and institutions of his time. If anything failed, he spoke of it no more. I often thought how I should excuse to him this or that failure; but he always ignored it in the cheerfullest way, and was immediately engaged with some new plan. This was a greatness peculiar to his own nature; not acquired, but innate."

We looked, after dinner, at some engravings after the most modern artists, especially in the landscape department; and we remarked with pleasure that nothing false could be detected.

"For ages there has been so much good in the world," said Goethe, "that there is no reason to wonder when it produces good in its turn."

"The worst of it is," said I, "that there are so many false doctrines, and that a young talent does not know to what saint he should devote himself."

"We have proofs of that," said Goethe. "We have seen whole generations ruined or injured by false maxims, and have also suffered ourselves. Then there is the facility nowadays of universally diffusing every error by means of printing. Though a critic may think better after some years, and diffuse among the public his better convictions, his false doctrine has operated meanwhile, and will in future like a spreading weed continue to work along with what is good. My only consolation is, that a really great talent is not to be led astray or spoiled."

We looked further at the engravings. "These are really good things," said Goethe. "You have before you the works of very fair talents, who have learned something, and have acquired no little taste and art. Still, something is wanting in all these pictures—the *Manly*. Take notice of this word, and underscore it. The pictures lack a certain urgent power; which in former ages was generally expressed, but in which the present age is deficient, and that with respect not only to painting but to all the other arts also. We have a more weakly race, of which we cannot say whether it is so by its origin, or by a more weakly training and diet."

"We see here," said I, "how much in art depends on a great personality, which indeed was common enough in earlier ages. When, at Venice, we stand before the works of Titian and Paul Veronese, we feel the powerful mind of these men, both in their first conception of the subject, and in the final execution. Their great energetic feeling has penetrated all parts of the picture; and this higher power of the artist's personality expands our own nature, and elevates us above ourselves, when we contemplate such works. This manly mind of which you speak is also to be found especially in the landscapes of Rubens. They indeed consist merely of trees, soil, water, rocks, and clouds; but his own bold temperament has penetrated into the forms; and thus while we see familiar nature we see it penetrated by the power of the artist, and reproduced according to his views."

"Certainly," said Goethe, "personality is everything in art and poetry; yet there are many weak personages among the modern critics who do not admit this, but look upon a great personality in a work of poetry or art merely as a kind of trifling appendage.

"However, to feel and respect a great personality one must be something oneself. All who denied the sublime to Euripides were either poor wretches incapable of comprehending such sublimity, or shameless charlatans who by their presumption wished to make more of themselves—and really did make more of themselves than they were."

Monday, February 14, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. He had been reading the memoirs of General Rapp; through which the conversation turned upon Napoleon, and the feelings that must have been experienced by Madame Letitia at finding herself the mother of so powerful a family.

Talent is indeed not hereditary, but it requires an apt physical substratum; and then it is by no means unimportant whether one is the first or the last born, nor whether one is the issue of strong and young, or weak and old parents.[1]

"It is remarkable," said I, "that, of all talents, the musical shows itself earliest; so that Mozart in his fifth, Beethoven in his eighth, and Hummel in his ninth year, astonished all near them by their performance and compositions."

"The musical talent," said Goethe, "may well show itself earliest of any; for music is something innate and internal, which needs little nourishment from without, and no experience drawn from life. Really, however, a phenomenon like that of Mozart remains an inexplicable prodigy. But how would the Divinity find everywhere opportunity to do wonders, if He did not sometimes try His powers on extraordinary individuals, at whom we stand astonished and cannot understand whence they come?"

Tuesday, February 15, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. I told him about the theatre; he praised the piece given yesterday—*Henry III*, by Dumas—as very excellent, but naturally found that such a dish would not suit the public.

"I should not," said he, "have ventured to give it, when I was director; for I remember well what trouble we had to smuggle upon the public the *Constant Prince*,[2] which has far more general human interest, is more poetic, and in fact lies much nearer to us, than *Henry III*."

I spoke of the *Grand Cophta*, which I had been lately reperusing. I talked over the scenes one by one, and at last expressed a wish to see it once on the stage.

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[1] This paragraph is not in quotation marks. It is perhaps a summary of what was agreed between the two.

[2] *El Principe Constante*, by Calderon.—J. O.

"I am pleased," said Goethe, "that you like that piece, and find out what I have worked into it. It was indeed no little labour to make an entirely real fact first poetical, and then theatrical. And yet you will grant that the whole is properly conceived for the stage. Schiller also was very partial to it; and we gave it once, when it had a brilliant effect with better-class people. But it is not for the public in general; the crimes of which it treats have about them an *apprehensive* character, which produces an uncomfortable feeling in the people. Its bold character places it, indeed, in the sphere of *Clara Gazul*; and the French poet might really envy me for taking from him so good a subject. I say *so good a subject*, because it is in truth not merely of moral, but also of great historical significance; the fact immediately preceded the French Revolution, and was to a certain extent its foundation. The Queen, through being implicated in that unlucky story of the necklace, lost her dignity, and was no longer respected; so that she lost, in the eyes of the people, the ground where she was unassailable. Hate injures nobody; it is contempt that casts men down. Kotzebue had been hated long; but before the student dared to use his dagger upon him, it was necessary for certain journals to make him contemptible."

Thursday, February 17, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. I brought him his *Residence at Carlsbad*, for the year 1807, which I had finished revising that morning. We spoke of wise passages, which occur there as hasty remarks of the day.

"People always fancy," said Goethe, laughing, "that we must become old to become wise; but, in truth, as years advance, it is hard to keep ourselves as wise as we were. Man becomes, indeed, in the different stages of his life, a different being; but he cannot say that he is a better one, and in certain matters he is as likely to be right in his twentieth as in his sixtieth year.

"We see the world one way from a plain, another way from the heights of a promontory, another from the glacier fields of the primary mountains. We see, from one of these points, a larger piece of world than from the other; but that is all, and we cannot say that we see more truly from any one than from the rest. When a writer leaves monuments on the different steps of his life, it is chiefly important that he should have an innate foundation and good will; that he should, at each step, have seen and felt clearly, and that, without any secondary aims, he should have said distinctly and truly what has passed in his mind. Then will his writings, if they were right at the step where they originated, remain always right, however the writer may develop or alter himself in after times.

"Lately, I found a piece of waste paper which I read. 'Hm,' said I to myself, 'what is written there is not so bad; you do not think otherwise, and would not have expressed yourself very differently.' But when I looked closely at the leaf, it was a fragment from my own works. For, as I am always striving onwards, I forget what I have written, and soon regard my productions as something foreign."

I asked about *Faust*, and what progress he had made with it.

"That," said Goethe, "will not again let me loose. I daily think and invent more and more of it. I have now had the whole manuscript of the second part stitched together, that it may lie a palpable mass before me. The place of the yet-lacking fourth act I have filled with white paper; and undoubtedly what is finished will allure and urge me to complete what has yet to be done. There is more than people think in these matters of sense, and we must aid the spiritual by all manner of devices."

He sent for the stitched *Faust*, and I was surprised to see how much he had written; for a good folio volume was before me.

"And all," said I, "has been done in the six years that I have been here; and yet, amid so many other occupations, you could have devoted but little time to it. We see how much a work grows, even if we add something only now and then!"

"That is a conviction that strengthens with age," said Goethe; "while youth believes all must be done in a single day. If fortune favour, and I continue in good health, I hope in the next spring months to get a great way on with the fourth act. It was, as you know, invented long since; but the other parts have, in course of execution, grown so much, that I can now use only the outline of my first invention, and must fill out this introduced portion so as to make it of a piece with the rest."

"A far richer world is displayed," said I, "in this second part than in the first."

"I should think so," said Goethe. "The first part is almost entirely subjective; it proceeded entirely from a perplexed impassioned individual, and his semi-darkness is probably highly pleasing to mankind. But in the second part there is scarcely anything of the subjective; here is seen a higher, broader clearer, more passionless world, and he who has not looked about him and had some experience will not know what to make of it."

"There will be found exercise for thought," said I; "some learning may also be needful. I am glad that I have read Schelling's little book on the Cabiri, and that I now know the drift of that famous passage in the Walpurgis Night."

"I have always found," said Goethe, laughing, "that it is well to know something."

Friday, February 18, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. We talked of different forms of government; and it was remarked what difficulties an excess of liberalism presents, as it calls forth the demands of individuals, and, from the quantity of wishes, raises uncertainty as to which should be satisfied. In the long run, over-great goodness, mildness, and moral delicacy, will not do, while underneath there is a mixed and sometimes vicious world to manage and hold in respect.

It was also remarked that the art of governing is a great *métier*, requiring the whole man, and that it is therefore not well for a ruler to have too strong tendencies for other affairs—as, for instance, a predominant inclination for the fine arts; since thus not only the interest of the Prince but also the powers of the State must be withdrawn from more necessary matters. A predominating love for the fine arts better suits rich private persons.

Goethe told me that his *Metamorphosis of Plants*, with Soret's translation, was going on well; and that, in his supplementary labours on these subjects, particularly on the "Spiral," quite unexpected favourable things had come to his aid from without.

"We have," said he, "as you know, been busy with this translation for more than a year; a thousand hindrances have come in our way; the enterprise has often come to an absolute standstill, and I have often cursed it in silence. But now I can do reverence to all these hindrances; for during these delays things have ripened abroad among other excellent men, so that they now bring the best grist to my mill, advance me beyond all conception, and will bring my work to a conclusion I could not have imagined a year ago. The like has often happened to me in life; and such cases lead to belief in a higher influence, in something dæmonic, which we adore without trying to explain further."

Saturday, February 19, 1831.

Dined at Goethe's, with Hofrath Vogel. A pamphlet on the island of Heligoland had been sent to Goethe; he read it with great interest, telling us what was most important.

After we had talked about this very peculiar locality, conversation took a medical turn; and Vogel told us, as the news of the day, how the natural smallpox, in defiance of all inoculation, had again broken out in Eisenach, and had carried off many in a short time.

"Nature," said Vogel, "plays us a trick every now and then; and we must watch her very closely, if our theory is to keep pace with her. Inoculation was thought so sure and infallible, that a law was made to enforce it. But now this Eisenach affair, where the persons who have been inoculated are nevertheless attacked by the natural smallpox, casts a suspicion on the infallibility of the remedy, and weakens the motive for observing the law."

"Nevertheless," said Goethe, "I am against any departure from the strict law for inoculation, since these trifling exceptions are nothing in comparison with the great benefits it confers."

"I am of the same opinion," said Vogel, "and would even maintain that in all cases where the natural disease is not prevented by the artificial one, the inoculation has been imperfect. For inoculation to have a protective power it must be strong enough to produce fever. Mere irritation of the skin without fever will not suffice. I have this day proposed in council that a stronger inoculation for the smallpox shall be incumbent on all the parties throughout the country who have to perform it."

"I hope that your proposal has been carried," said Goethe. "Indeed I am always for a rigid adherence to a law; especially at a time like ours, when out of weakness and excessive liberality too much is always being conceded."

It was then remarked that we were beginning to be too gentle and lax with regard to the responsibility of criminals, and that medical testimony and opinion often had the effect of making the criminal evade the penalty he had incurred. On this occasion Vogel praised a young physician, who had always shown strength of character in such cases, and who lately, when the court was in doubt whether a certain infanticide was responsible or not, had given his testimony that she unquestionably was so.

Sunday, February 20, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. He told me he had tested my observation on the blue shadows in the snow, viz. that they were produced by the reflection of the blue sky, and that he acknowledged its correctness. "But both causes may, however, co-operate," said he, "and the demand (*Forderung*) excited by the yellowish light may strengthen the appearance of the blue." This I willingly conceded, and rejoiced that Goethe at last agreed with me.

"I am sorry," said I, "that I did not on the spot write down the observations on colour which I made at Monte Rosa and Mont Blanc. The chief result, however, was, that at a distance of from eighteen to twenty miles, in the brightest noonday sun, the snow appeared yellow and even reddish—while the dark parts of the mountains, which were free from snow, stood out in the most decided blue. This phenomenon did not surprise me, as I could have predicted that the semi-transparent mass which intervened would give a deep yellow tone to the white snow as it reflected the noonday sun; nevertheless, it pleased me, as it fully confuted the erroneous opinion of some scientific persons, that the air has the property of giving a blue colour. For if the air had been blue of itself, the snow, for a space of twenty miles—that is to say, the distance between me and Monte Rosa—must have appeared bright blue, or a whitish blue, and not yellow and a yellowish red."

"This observation," said Goethe, "is important, and completely confutes every error."

"In fact," said I, "the doctrine of the dense medium is so simple that the belief that it can be communicated to another in a few days is a natural mistake. The difficulty is to apply the law, and to recognize a primitive phenomenon in phenomena that are conditioned and concealed a thousand different ways."

"I would compare it," said Goethe, "to whist, the laws and rules of which are very easy to teach, but which must be played a long time before a player can become a master. Altogether we learn nothing from mere hearing, and he who does not take an active part in certain subjects knows them but half and superficially."

Goethe then told me of the book of a young scientist, which he could not help praising, on account of the clearness of his descriptions, while he pardoned him for his teleological tendency.

"It is natural to man," said Goethe, "to regard himself as the final cause of creation, and to consider all other things merely in relation to himself so far as they are of use to him. He makes himself master of the vegetable and animal world; and, while he claims other creatures as a fitting diet, he acknowledges his God, and praises His goodness in this paternal care. He takes milk from the cow, honey from the bee, wool from the sheep; and while he gives these things a purpose which is useful to himself, he believes that they were made on that account. Nay, he cannot conceive that even the smallest herb was not made for him; and if he has not yet ascertained its utility, he believes that he may discover it in future.

"Then, too, as man thinks in general, so does he always think in particular, and he does not fail to transfer his ordinary views from life into science, and to ask the use and purpose of every single part of our organic being.

"This may do for a time, and he may get on so for a time in science; but he will soon come to phenomena where this small view will not be sufficient, and where, if he does not take a higher stand, he will soon be involved in mere contradictions.

"The utility-teachers say that oxen have horns to defend themselves; but I ask, why is the sheep without any—and when it has them, why are they twisted about the ears so as to answer no purpose at all?

"If, on the other hand, I say the ox defends himself with his horns because he has them, it is quite a different matter.

"The question as to the purpose—the question *Wherefore?*—is completely unscientific. But we get on farther with the question *How?* For if I ask *how* has the ox horns, I am led to study his organization, and learn at the same time why the lion has no horns, and cannot have any.

"Thus, man has in his skull two hollows which are never filled up. The question *wherefore* could not take us far in this case; but the question *how* informs me that these hollows are remains of the animal skull, which are found on a larger scale in inferior organization, and are not quite obliterated in man, with all his eminence.[1]

"The teachers of utility would think that they lost their God if they did not worship Him who gave the ox horns to defend itself. But I hope I may be allowed to worship Him who, in the abundance of His creation, was great enough, after making a thousand kinds of plants, to make one more, in which all the rest should be comprised; and after a thousand kinds of animals, a being comprising them all—man.

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[1] A glimmering of Darwinism. Possibly derived from Lamarck.

"Let people serve Him who gives to the beast his fodder, and to man meat and drink as much as he can enjoy. But I worship Him who has infused into the world such a power of production, that, when only the millionth part of it comes out into life, the world swarms with creatures to such a degree that war, pestilence, fire, and water cannot prevail against them. That is *my* God!"

Monday, February 21, 1831.

Goethe praised Schelling's last discourse, with which he had calmed the students at Munich.

"It is thoroughly good," said he; "and we rejoice once again at the fine talent we have long known and revered. In this case he had an excellent subject and a worthy purpose, and his success has been as great as possible. If the same could be said of the subject and purpose of his work on the Cabiri, that would claim praise from us also, since also he has displayed in it his rhetorical talent and art."

Schelling's *Cabiri* brought the conversation to the classic Walpurgis Night, and the difference between this and the scenes on the Brocken in the first part.

"The old Walpurgis Night," said Goethe, "is monarchical, since the devil is there respected throughout as a decided chief. But the classic Walpurgis Night is thoroughly republican; since all stand on a plain near one another, so that each is as prominent as his associates, and nobody is subordinate or troubled about the rest."

"Moreover," said I, "in the classic assembly all are sharply-outlined individualities; while, on the German Blocksberg, each individuality is lost in the general witch-mass."

"Therefore," said Goethe, "Mephistopheles knows what is meant when the Homunculus speaks to him of *Thessalian* witches. A connoisseur of antiquity will have something suggested by these words, while to the unlearned it remains a mere name."

"Antiquity," said I, "must be very living to you, else you could not make all these figures step so freshly into life, and treat them with such freedom as you do."

"Without a lifelong occupation with plastic art," said Goethe, "it would not have been possible to me. The difficulty was in observing due moderation amid such plenty, and avoiding all figures that did not perfectly fit into my plan. I made, for instance, no use of the Minotaur, the Harpies, and certain other monsters."

"But what you have exhibited in that night," said I, "is so grouped, and fits so well together, that it can be easily recalled by the imagination and made into a picture. The painters will certainly not allow such good subjects to escape them; and I especially hope to see Mephistopheles among the Phorcyades, when he tries the famous mask in profile."

"There are a few pleasantries there," said Goethe, "which will more or less occupy the world. Suppose the French are the first to perceive *Helena*, and to see what can be done with it for the stage. They will spoil the piece as it is; but they will make a wise use of it for their own purposes, and that is all we can expect or desire. To Phorcyas they will certainly add a chorus of monsters, as is indeed already indicated in one passage."

"It would be a great matter," said I, "if a clever poet of the romantic school treated the piece as an opera throughout, and Rossini collected all his great talent for a grand composition, to produce an effect with the *Helena*. It affords opportunities for magnificent scenes, surprising transformations, brilliant costumes, and charming ballets, which are not easily to be found elsewhere; not to mention that this abundance of sensible material rests on the foundation of an ingenious fable that could scarcely be excelled."

"We will wait for what the gods bring us," said Goethe; "such things are not to be hurried. The great matter is for people to enter into it, and for managers, poets, and composers to see their advantage in it."

Tuesday, February 22, 1831.

Upper-Consistorial Counsellor Schwabe met me in the street. I walked with him a little way; he told me of his manifold occupations, and thus I was enabled to look into the important sphere of action of this distinguished man. He said that he employed his spare hours in editing a little volume of new sermons; that one of his school-books had lately been translated into Danish, that forty thousand copies of it had been sold, and that it had been introduced into the best schools of Prussia. He begged me to visit him, which I gladly promised to do.

At dinner with Goethe, I spoke of Schwabe, and Goethe agreed entirely with my praises of him.

"The Grand Duchess," said he, "values him highly; and, indeed, she always knows what people are worth. I shall have him drawn for my collection of portraits; and you will do well to visit him, and ask him to permit the inclusion.

"Visit him, and show sympathy in what he is doing and planning. It will be interesting for you to observe a sphere of action that cannot be rightly understood without closer intercourse with such a man."

Wednesday, February 23, 1831.

Before dinner, while walking in the Erfurt road, I met Goethe, who stopped me and took me into his carriage. We went a good way by the fir wood, and talked about natural history.

The mountains and hills were covered with snow; and I mentioned the great delicacy of the yellow, observing that at a distance of nine miles, with some density intervening, a dark surface rather appeared blue than a white one yellow. Goethe agreed with me, and we then spoke of the high significance of the primitive phenomena, behind which we believe the Deity may directly be discerned.

"I ask not," said Goethe, "whether this highest Being has reason and understanding, but I feel that He is Reason, is Understanding itself. Therewith are all creatures penetrated; and man has so much of it that he can recognize parts of the Highest."

At table, there was mention of the efforts of certain inquirers into nature, who, to penetrate the organic world, would ascend through mineralogy.

"This," said Goethe, "is a great mistake. In the mineralogical world the simplest, in the organic world the most complex, is the most excellent. We see, too, that these two worlds have quite different tendencies, and that a stepwise progress from one to the other is by no means to be found."

Thursday, February 24, 1831.

I read Goethe's essay on Zahn in the Viennese *Jahrbücher*, and was filled with admiration when I thought of the premises which the writing of it presupposed.

At dinner Goethe told me that Soret had been with him, and that they had made good progress with the translation of the *Metamorphosis*.

"The difficulty in nature," said Goethe, "is to see the law where it is concealed from us, and not to be misled by phenomena that contradict our senses. For in nature there is much that contradicts our senses and is nevertheless true. That the sun stands still, that he does not rise and set, but that the earth performs a diurnal revolution with incredible swiftness, contradicts the senses as much as anything; but yet no well-informed person doubts that this is the case. Thus, too, there are in the vegetable kingdom contradictory phenomena, by which we must be very careful not to be led into false ways."

Saturday, February 26, 1831.

[A vague soliloquy, beginning about the *Theory of Colours*, but wandering off into general moralization.]

Monday, February 28, 1831.

[Another diffuse soliloquy (arising out of perusal of the MS. of the fourth volume of Goethe's Life). It touches on the Dæmonic; from connoisseurship of art it ascends to connoisseurship of the universe, and repeats the notion of an aristocracy of intellect necessary for comprehension of the Whole; then it traces the method, through Greek cosmogony and anthropomorphic Christianity, to Spinoza; in whose higher point of view Goethe apparently came to rest.]

Wednesday, March 2, 1831.

I dined with Goethe to-day; and, the conversation soon turning again on the Dæmonic, he added remarks to define it more closely.

"The Dæmonic is that which cannot be explained by Reason or Understanding; it lies not in my nature, but I am subject to it."

"Napoleon," said I, "seems to have been of the dæmonic sort."

"He was so, thoroughly and in the highest degree, so that scarce anyone is to be compared with him. Our late Grand Duke, too, was a dæmonic nature, full of unlimited power of action and unrest; so that his own dominion was too little for him, and the greatest would have been too little. Dæmonic beings of such sort the Greeks reckoned among their demigods."

"Is not the Dæmonic," said I, "perceptible in events also?"

"Particularly, and indeed in all that we cannot explain by Reason and Understanding. It manifests itself in the most varied manner throughout nature—in the invisible as in the visible. Many creatures are of a purely dæmonic kind; in many, parts of it are effective."

"Has not Mephistopheles," said I, "dæmonic traits, too?"

"No, Mephistopheles is much too negative a being. The Dæmonic manifests itself in a thoroughly active power. Among artists it is found more among musicians—less among painters.

In Paganini, it shows itself in a high degree; and it is thus he produces such great effects."

Thursday, March 3, 1831.

At noon with Goethe. He was looking through some architectural designs, and observed it required some courage to build palaces, as we are never certain how long one stone will remain upon another.

"Those are most fortunate," said he, "who live in tents; or who, like some Englishmen, are always going from one city and one inn to another, and find everywhere a good table ready."

Sunday, March 6, 1831.

At dinner talked on various subjects with Goethe. We spoke of children and their naughty tricks; and he compared these to the stem-leaves of a plant, which fall away gradually of their own accord, and which need not be corrected with great severity.

"Man," said he, "has various stages he must go through; and each brings with it its peculiar virtues and faults, which, in their epoch, are to be considered natural, and in a manner right. On the next step he is another man; there is no trace left of the earlier virtues or faults; but others have taken their place. And so on to the final transformation, as to which we know not what we shall be."

After dinner, Goethe read me fragments, which he had kept from 1775, of *Hanswursts Hochzeit* (Hanswurst's Wedding). Kilian Brustfleck opens the piece with a monologue; in which he complains that Hanswurst's education, despite all his care, has come to no good. This scene, and all the rest, were written in the tone of *Faust*. A productive force, powerful even to wantonness, displayed itself in every line; and I could not but lament that it went so far beyond all bounds, that even the fragments cannot be communicated.

Goethe read me the list of the *dramatis personæ*, which nearly filled three pages, and were about a hundred in number. There were all the nicknames imaginable; some of them so comic and ludicrous, that we could not help laughing at them. Many referred to bodily defects, and distinguished a figure so that it came like life before the eye; others indicated the most various follies and vices, and afforded a deep look into the breadth of the immoral world. Had the piece been finished, people must have admired the invention that could combine such various symbolical figures in one single action.

"It was not to be imagined that I could finish the piece," said Goethe; "for it demanded a high degree of wanton daring; which I had at moments, but which did not in fact lie in the serious tenor of my nature, and on which I could not depend. Then in Germany our circles are too limited for one to come forward with such an undertaking. On a broad ground, like Paris, such eccentricities might be ventured—a Béranger being possible there, and quite impossible at Frankfort or Weimar."

Tuesday, March 8, 1831.

Dined to-day with Goethe, who began by telling me that he had been reading *Ivanhoe.*

"Walter Scott," said he, "is a great talent; he has not his equal; and we need not wonder at the effect he produces on the whole reading world. He gives me much to think of; and I discover in him a wholly new art, with laws of its own."

We spoke then of the fourth volume of the biography, and came upon the subject of the Dæmonic before we were aware.

"In poetry," said Goethe, "especially in what is unconscious, before which reason and understanding fall short, and which therefore produces effects far surpassing all conception, there is always something dæmonic.

"So is it with music, in the highest degree; for it stands so high that no understanding can reach it, and an influence flows from it which masters all, and for which none can account. Hence, religious worship cannot dispense with it; it is one of the chief means of working upon men miraculously. Thus the Dæmonic loves to throw itself into significant individuals, especially when they are in high places, like Frederick and Peter the Great.

"Our late Grand Duke had it to such a degree, that nobody could resist him. He had an attractive influence upon men by his mere tranquil presence, without needing even to show himself good-humoured and friendly. All that I undertook by his advice succeeded; so that, in cases where my own understanding and reason were insufficient, I needed only to ask him what was to be done; he gave me an answer instinctively, and I could always be sure of happy results.

"He would have been enviable indeed if he could have possessed himself of my ideas and higher strivings; for when the dæmonic spirit forsook him, and only the human was left, he knew not how to set to work, and was much troubled at it.

"In Byron, also, this element was probably active in a high degree; so that he possessed great powers of attraction, and women especially could not resist him."

"Into the idea of the Divine," said I, by way of experiment, "this active power which we name the Dæmonic would not seem to enter."

"My good friend," said Goethe, "what do we know of the idea of the Divine? and what can our narrow ideas tell of the Highest Being? Should I, like a Turk, name it with a hundred names, I should still fall short, and, in comparison with such boundless attributes, have said nothing."

Wednesday, March 9, 1831.

Goethe continued to speak of Sir Walter Scott with the highest acknowledgment.

"We read far too many poor things," said he; "thus losing time, and gaining nothing. We should only read what we admire; as I did in my youth, and as now with Sir Walter Scott. I have just begun *Rob Roy*, and will read his best novels in succession. All is great—material, import, characters, execution; and then what infinite diligence in the preparatory studies! what truth of detail in the execution! We see, too, what English history is; and what a thing it is when such an inheritance falls to the lot of a clever poet. Our German history, in five volumes, is, on the other hand, sheer poverty; so that, after *Goetz von Berlichingen*, writers went immediately into private life, giving us an *Agnes Bernauerin*, and an *Otto von Wittelsbach*,[1] which was really not much."

I said that I had been reading *Daphnis and Chloe*, in Courier's translation.

"That, also," said Goethe, "is a masterpiece, which I have often read and admired; in which Understanding, Art, and Taste, appear at their highest point, and beside which the good Virgil retreats somewhat into the background. The landscape is quite in the Poussin style, and appears behind the personages, finished with a very few strokes.

"You know Courier found, in the Florentine Library, a new manuscript, containing the principal passage of the poem which was not in the preceding editions. Now, I must acknowledge that I have always read and admired the poem in its imperfect state, without observing or feeling that the proper apex was wanting. But this may be a proof of the excellence of the poem, since what we possessed satisfied us so completely that we never thought of what was lacking."

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[1] These are two plays written after the manner of *Goetz*: the first is by Count Joseph von Törring; the second, by Francis Babo.—J. O.

After dinner, Goethe showed me a drawing by Coudray, of a fine door for the Dornburg Castle, with a Latin inscription —signifying that he who entered should find friendly reception and entertainment and that to the passer-by a happy journey was wished.

Goethe had translated this inscription into a German distich, and placed it as a motto over a letter he had written in the summer of 1828, after the death of the Grand Duke, during his residence at Dornburg, to Colonel von Beulwitz. I had heard much in public of this letter, and was very glad when Goethe showed it me to-day, with the drawing of the door. . .

Thursday, March 10, 1831.

I read to-day, with the Prince, Goethe's novel of the Tiger and the Lion[1]; and while he was highly pleased, feeling the effect of a great art, I was no less so at taking a clear view of a finished composition. . . . .

Friday, March 11, 1831.

At dinner with Goethe, talked on various subjects. "It is a peculiarity of Walter Scott's," said he, "that his great talent in representing details often leads him into faults. Thus, in *Ivanhoe*, there is a scene where they are seated at a table in a castle-hall, at night, and a stranger enters. Now, he is quite right in describing the stranger's appearance and dress; but it is a fault that he goes to the length of describing his feet, shoes, and stockings. When we sit down in the evening, and someone comes in, we see only the upper part of his body. If I describe the feet, daylight enters at once, and the scene loses its nocturnal character."

Goethe then continued to speak with great admiration of Sir Walter Scott. I requested him to put his views on paper; which he refused to do, remarking that Scott's art was so high that it is hard to give a public opinion about him.

Monday, March 14, 1831.

Dined with Goethe, and talked of several subjects. I had to tell him of the *Dumb Girl of Portici*, which had been represented the day before yesterday; when we said that a properly-grounded motive for a revolution was not shown at all, and that this very circumstance pleased people, since everybody could fill up the gap with something offensive in his own city and country.

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[1] *Die Novelle.*—J. O.

"The whole opera," said Goethe, "is, in fact, a satire upon the people; for, when it makes a public matter of a fisher-girl's amour, and calls the prince a tyrant because he marries a princess, it appears as absurd and ridiculous as possible."

After dinner, Goethe showed me some drawings illustrative of Berlin phrases, in which the liveliest subjects were represented; and we praised the moderation of the artist, in approaching caricature without actually going into it.

Tuesday, March 15, 1831.

[The first part of this entry is a statement of Eckermann's editorial work on *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The rest is an account of what he said about Goethe's *Novelle* at a dinner-party at the Prince's where Soret was present. Not inspired.]

Wednesday, March 16, 1831.

Dined with Goethe, to whom I brought back the fourth volume of his Life, and conversed much about it.

We also spoke of the conclusion to *William Tell*; and I expressed my wonder that Schiller should have committed the fault of lowering his hero by his unworthy conduct to the fugitive Duke of Suabia, whom he judges severely while he boasts of his own deed.

"It is scarcely conceivable," said Goethe; "but Schiller, like others, was subject to the influence of women; and, if he committed such a fault, it was rather on account of this influence than from his own fine nature."

Friday, March 18, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. I brought him *Daphnis and Chloe*, which he wished to read once more.

We spoke of higher maxims, whether it was good or possible to communicate them to others. "The capacity of apprehending what is high," said Goethe, "is very rare; and therefore in common life a man does well to keep such things for himself, and only to give out so much as is needful to have some advantage against others."

We touched upon the point that many men, especially critics and poets, wholly ignore true greatness, while they assign extraordinary value to mediocrity.

"Man," said Goethe, "recognizes and praises only what he himself is capable of doing; and as certain people have their proper existence in the mediocre, they get a trick of thoroughly depreciating in literature anything that, while faulty, may have good points; so as to elevate the mediocre, which they praise, to a greater eminence."

We then spoke of the Theory of Colours, and of certain German professors who continue to warn their pupils against it as a great error.

"I am sorry, for the sake of many a good scholar," said Goethe; "but, for myself, it is quite indifferent; my theory is as old as the world, and cannot always be repudiated and set aside."

Goethe then told me that he was making good progress with his new edition of the *Metamorphosis of Plants*, and Soret's translation—which was more and more felicitous.

"It will be a remarkable book," said he, "as the most varied elements are worked up into one whole. I have inserted passages from some important young German naturalists; and it is pleasing to see that such a good style has been formed among the better writers in Germany, that we cannot tell whether one or the other is speaking. However, the book gives me more trouble than I expected; and I was at first led into the undertaking almost against myself—but something dæmonic prevailed, which was not to be resisted."

"You did well," said I, "in yielding to such influences, for the dæmonic seems to be so powerful, that it is sure to carry its point at last."

"Only," replied Goethe, "man, in his turn, must endeavour to carry his point against the Dæmonic; and in the present case I must try by all industry and toil to make my book as good as lies in my power, and as circumstances will allow. Such matters are in the same predicament as the game which the French call *codille*, where a great deal is decided by the dice which are thrown, but where it is left to the skill of the player to place the men well on the board."

Sunday, March 20, 1831.

Goethe told me at table that he had been lately reading *Daphnis and Chloe*.

"The book," said he, "is so beautiful, that, amid the bad circumstances in which we live, we cannot retain the impression we receive from it, but are astonished anew every time we read it. The clearest day prevails in it, and we think we are looking at nothing but Herculanean pictures; while these paintings react upon the book, and assist our fancy as we read."

"I was much pleased," said I, "at a certain isolation in which the whole is placed. There is scarcely a foreign allusion to take us out of those happy regions. Of the deities, Pan and the nymphs are alone active; any other is scarcely named, and still we see that these are quite enough for the wants of shepherds."

"And yet, notwithstanding all this isolation," said Goethe, "a complete world is developed. We see shepherds of every kind: agriculturists, gardeners, vine-dressers, sailors, robbers, and warriors; besides genteel townsmen, great lords, and serfs."

"We also see man," said I, "in all his grades of life, from his birth to his old age; and all the domestic circumstances occasioned by changes of season pass before our eyes."

"Then the landscape," said Goethe—"how clearly it is given with a few touches! We can see vineyards, fields, and orchards, rising behind the persons; below, the meadow and the stream; and, in the distance, the broad sea. Then there is not a trace of gloomy days, of mists, clouds, and damp; but always the clearest, bluest sky, a charming air, and the driest soil—so that naked limbs would readily be stretched anywhere.

"The whole poem,"[1] continued Goethe, "shows the highest art and cultivation. It has been so well considered, that not a motive is wanting: all are of the best and most substantial kind; as, for instance, that of the treasure near the dolphin on the shore. Then there is a taste, and a perfection, and a delicacy of feeling, which cannot be excelled. Everything that is repulsive and disturbs from without the happy condition the poem expresses—such as invasion, robbery, and war—is got rid of as quickly as possible, so that scarcely a trace of it is left. Then vice appears in the train of the townsmen; even there not in the principal characters, but in a subordinate personage. All this is of the highest beauty."

"Then," said I, "I was much pleased to see how well the relation between master and servant is expressed. On one hand, there is the kindest treatment; on the other—in spite of all naïve freedom—great respect, and an endeavour to gain in any way the favour of the master. Thus the young townsman, who has rendered himself odious to Daphnis, endeavours, when the latter is recognized as his master's son, to regain his favour by boldly rescuing Chloe from the cowherds, and bringing her back to him."

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[1] "Gedicht" has a wider meaning than the English word "poem."—J. O.

"All these things," said Goethe, "show great understanding; it is excellent also that Chloe preserves her innocence to the end—and the motives for this are so well contrived that the greatest human affairs are brought under notice. It would need a whole book to estimate properly all the great merits of this poem; and it would be well to read it every year, to be instructed by it again and again, and to receive anew the impression of its great beauty."

Monday, March 21, 1831.

We talked on political subjects—of the incessant disturbances at Paris, and the fancy of young people to meddle in the highest affairs of state.

"In England, also," said I, "the students some time ago tried to obtain an influence on the decision of the Catholic question by sending in petitions; but they were laughed at, and no further notice was taken of them."

"The example of Napoleon," said Goethe, "has, especially in the young people of France who grew up under that hero, excited a spirit of egotism; and they will not rest until a great despot once again rises up among them, in whom they may see the perfection of what they themselves wish to be. The misfortune is, that a man like Napoleon will not so soon again be born; and I almost fear that some hundred thousands of human lives will be wasted before the world is again tranquillized.

"Of literary influence there can be no thought at present; nothing further can be done than quietly to prepare good things for a more peaceful time."

After these few political remarks, we spoke again of *Daphnis and Chloe*. Goethe praised Courier's translation as perfect.

"Courier did well," said he, "to respect and retain Amyot's old translation; and only in parts to improve, to purify, and bring it nearer the original. The old French is so naïve, and suits the subject so perfectly, that it will not be easy to make in any language a more perfect translation of this book."

We then spoke of Courier's own works—of his little fugitive pieces, and the defence of the famous ink-spot on the manuscript at Florence.

"Courier," said Goethe, "is a great natural talent. He has features of Lord Byron, as also of Beaumarchais and Diderot. He is like Byron in command over all things that may serve him as argument—like Beaumarchais in his adroitness as an advocate—like Diderot in dialectic skill—and it is not possible to be more spirited and witty.[1] However, he seems not entirely to clear himself from the ink-spot accusation, and is, in his whole tendency, not sufficiently positive to claim unqualified praise. He is at variance with all the world, and we cannot but suppose that some fault is on his side."

We spoke of the difference between the German notion *Geist*, and the French *esprit.*

"The French *esprit*," said Goethe, "means nearly the same with our German word *Witz*. Our *Geist* might, perhaps, be expressed in French by *esprit* and *âme*. It includes the idea of productivity, which is not in the French *esprit*."

"Voltaire," said I, "had nevertheless what we name *Geist* in the German sense of the word. And as *esprit* does not suffice, what word do the French use?"

"In such a lofty instance," said Goethe, "they say *génie*."

"I am now reading," said I, "a volume of Diderot, and am astonished by the extraordinary talent of the man. And what knowledge! what a power of language! We look into a great animated world, where one constantly stimulated another, and mind and character were kept in such constant exercise that both must be flexible and strong. But it seems to me extraordinary to see what men the French had in their literature in the last century. I am astonished when I only look at it."

"It was the metamorphosis of a hundred-year-old literature," said Goethe, "which had been growing ever since Louis XIV, and stood now in full flower. But it was really Voltaire who excited such minds as Diderot, D'Alembert, and Beaumarchais; for to be *somewhat* near him a man needed to be *much*, and could take no holidays."

Goethe then told me of a young professor of the Oriental languages and literature at Jena, who had lived a long time at Paris—so highly cultivated that he wished I would make his acquaintance.

As I went, he gave me an essay, by Schrön, on the expected comet, that I might not remain entirely a stranger to such matters.

Tuesday, March 22, 1831.

After dinner, Goethe read to me passages from the letter of a young friend, at Rome. Some German artists appeared there with long hair, moustachios, shirt-collars turned over on old-fashioned German coats, tobacco-pipes, and bull-dogs. They do not seem to visit Rome for the sake of the great masters, or to learn anything. To them Raphael seems weak, and Titian merely a good colourist.

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[1] The words "spirited and witty" are used by the American translator as an equivalent for the untranslatable "geistreich." The remarks which immediately follow touch upon this most difficult word.—J. O.

"Niebuhr," said Goethe, "was right when he saw a barbarous age coming. It is already here, we are in the midst of it; for wherein does barbarism consist, unless in not appreciating what is excellent!"

Our young friend gave an account of the carnival, the election of the new Pope, and the revolution that broke out immediately afterwards.

We see Horace Vernet armed like a knight; while some German artists stay quietly at home, and cut off their beards—which seems to intimate that they have not, by their conduct, made themselves very popular among the Romans.[1]

We discussed whether the errors now perceptible in some young German artists had proceeded from individuals and spread abroad by intellectual contagion, or whether they had their origin in the general tendency of the time.

"They come," said Goethe, "from a few individuals, and have now been in operation for forty years. The doctrine was, that the artist chiefly needs piety and genius to be equal to the best. Such a doctrine was very flattering, and was eagerly snatched up. For, to become pious, a man need learn nothing, and genius each one inherited from his mother. You need only utter something that flatters indolence and conceit, to be sure of plenty of adherents among commonplace people."

Friday, March 25, 1831.

Goethe showed me an elegant green elbow-chair, which he had lately bought at an auction.

"However," said he, "I shall use it but little, or not at all; for all kinds of commodiousness are against my nature. You see in my chamber no sofa; I always sit in my old wooden chair, and never till a few weeks ago have I had a leaning-place put for my head. If I am surrounded by convenient tasteful furniture, my thoughts are absorbed, and I am placed in an agreeable but passive state. Unless we are accustomed to them from early youth, splendid chambers and elegant furniture are for people who neither have nor can have any thoughts."

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[1] This paragraph, although not in quotation marks in the German, appears to be an extract from the young friend's letter describing the Carnival.

Sunday, March 27, 1831.

After long expectations, the finest spring weather has come. On the perfectly blue heaven floats only some little white cloud now and then, and it is warm enough to resume summer clothing.

Goethe had the table covered in a pavilion in the garden, and so we dined once more in the open air. We talked of the Grand Duchess; how she is quietly at work in all directions, doing good, and making the hearts of all her subjects her own.

"The Grand Duchess," said Goethe, "has as much intellect and sweetness as good will; she is a true blessing to the country. And as men are everywhere quick to feel whence they receive benefits, worshipping the sun and kindly elements, I wonder not that all hearts turn to her with love, and that she is speedily appreciated, as she deserves to be."

I mentioned that I had begun *Minna von Barnhelm* with the Prince, and observed how excellent this piece appeared to me.

"Lessing," said I, "has been spoken of as a cold man of understanding; but I find in this drama as much heart, soul, charming naturalness, and free world-culture of a fresh, cheerful, living man, as could be desired."

"You may imagine," said Goethe, "what an effect that work produced on us young people when it came out in that dark time. Truly it was a glittering meteor. It taught us to perceive that there was something higher than anything the weak literary epoch gave any notion of. The first two acts are a model in the art of introduction; from which much has been learned, and much may be learned still. Nowadays, indeed, writers are not curious about this art: the effect, which was once expected in the third act, they will now have in the first scene: and they do not reflect that it is with poetry as with going to sea, where we should push from the shore, and reach a certain elevation, before we unfurl all our sails."

Goethe had some excellent Rhine wine brought; it had been sent by his Frankfort friends, as a present, on his last birthday. He told some stories about Merck, and how he could not pardon the Grand Duke for having once, in the Ruhl near Eisenach, praised an ordinary wine as excellent.

"Merck and I," he continued, "were always to one another as Mephistopheles to Faust. Thus he scoffed at a letter written by my father from Italy, containing a complaint of the miserable way of living—the heavy wine, the food to which he was unaccustomed, and the mosquitoes. Merck could not forgive him, in that delicious country and surrounded by such magnificence, for being troubled about such little matters as eating, drinking, and flies.

"All Merck's tauntings, no doubt, proceeded from a high state of culture; only, as he was not productive, but had, on the contrary, a decidedly negative tendency, he was ever more inclined to blame than to praise, and was involuntarily always seeking for means to gratify this inclination."

We talked of Vogel, and his ministerial talents; of ——, and his character.

"——," said Goethe, "is a man by himself—a man who can be compared with no other. He was the only one who sided with me in opposing the freedom of the press: he stands fast; he is trustworthy; he will always abide by what is legitimate."

After dinner, we walked up and down in the garden, taking our pleasure in the white snowdrops and yellow crocuses, now in full flower. The tulips, too, were coming out; and we talked of the splendour and costliness of this growth of Holland.

"A great flower-painter," said Goethe, "is not now to be expected: we have attained too high a degree of scientific truth; and the botanist counts the stamens after the painter, while he has no eye for picturesque lights and grouping."

Monday, March 28, 1831.

To-day I again passed some very delightful hours with Goethe. "My *Metamorphosis of Plants*," said he, "is as good as finished. What I have to say about the spiral and Herr von Martius is also as good as done; and I have this morning resumed the fourth volume of my Autobiography, and drawn up a scheme of what I have yet to do. I may almost say I find it enviable to be allowed, at my advanced age, to write the history of my youth, and to describe an epoch in many ways highly significant."

We talked over the particulars, which were present to my mind as well as to his.

"In the description of your love-affair with Lili," said I, "we never miss your youth, but these scenes bear the perfect breath of early years."

"That is because such scenes are poetical," said Goethe, "and I was able to compensate by the force of poetry for the feeling of youthful love in which I was deficient."

We then talked of the remarkable passage wherein Goethe describes his sister's situation. "This chapter," said he, "will be read with interest by many ladies of education; for there will be many like my sister in this respect, that, with superior mental and moral endowments, they are without the advantage of personal beauty."

"That, when a ball or festival was at hand," said I, "she was generally afflicted with an eruption in the face, is so odd that it may be ascribed to the influence of something dæmonic."

"She was a remarkable being," said Goethe; "she stood morally very high, and had not a trace of sensuousness about her. The thought of resigning herself to a man was repulsive to her, and we may imagine that this peculiarity caused many unpleasant hours in marriage. Women who have a similar aversion, or do not love their husbands, will feel the force of this. On this account I could never look upon my sister as married; she would have been much more in her place as an abbess in a convent.

"Although she was married to one of the best of men, she was still unhappy in a married life, and hence it was that she so passionately opposed my projected union with Lili."

Tuesday, March 29, 1831.

We talked to-day about Merck, and Goethe told me some more of his ways.

"The late Grand Duke," said he, "was very fond of Merck, so that he once became his security for a debt of four thousand dollars. Before long, Merck, to our astonishment, sent the bond back. His circumstances had not improved, and we could not divine what sort of a negotiation he had made. When I saw him again, he explained the enigma thus:

"'The Duke,' said he, 'is an excellent, generous man, who trusts and helps men whenever he can. Now I said to myself, "If you cheat him out of his money, that will prejudice a thousand others; for he will lose his precious trustfulness, and many unfortunate but worthy men will suffer, because one was a rascal." Well now—what have I done? I have made a speculation, and borrowed the money from a scoundrel, for if I cheat him it will be no matter; but if I had cheated our good lord, it would have been a pity.'"

We laughed at the whimsical greatness of the man.

"Merck had a habit," continued Goethe, "of continually shouting *hè, hè,* as he talked. This habit grew upon him with advancing years, till at length it was like the bark of a dog. He fell at last into a deep hypochondriacal gloom, the consequence of his many speculations, and finished by shooting himself. He imagined he must become bankrupt; but it was found that his affairs were by no means in so bad a state as he had supposed."

Wednesday, March 30, 1831.

We talked again of the Dæmonic.

"It throws itself willingly into figures of importance," said Goethe, "and prefers somewhat dark times. In a clear prosaic city, like Berlin, for instance, it would scarcely find occasion to manifest itself."

In this remark Goethe expressed what I had been thinking some days since. This gave me pleasure, as we always feel delight in finding our thoughts confirmed.

Yesterday and this morning I had been reading the third volume of his Biography, and felt as in experience with a foreign language, when, after making some progress, we again read a book that we thought we understood before but which we now first perceive in its minutest touches and delicate shades.

"Your Biography," said I, "is a book that greatly helps our culture."

"Those are merely results from my life," said he; "and the particular facts related serve only to confirm a general reflection —a higher truth."

"What you state about Basedow," said I, "how, in order to attain his higher ends, he stood in need of persons, and would have gained their favour, but never reflected that he would spoil all by such a totally reckless utterance of his offensive religious views, and by making men regard with suspicion what they adhered to with love—these and similar traits appear highly important."

"I imagine," said Goethe, "that there are in the book some symbols of human life. I called it *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (Poetry and Truth), because it raises itself by higher tendencies from the region of a lower Reality. Now Jean Paul, in the spirit of contradiction, has written *Wahrheit aus meinem Leben* (Truth out of my Life), as if the *truth* from the life of such a man could be any other than that the author was a Philistine. But the Germans do not easily understand how to receive anything out of the common course, and what is of a high nature often passes by them without their being aware. A fact of our lives is valuable, not so far as it is true, but so far as it is significant."

Thursday, March 31, 1831.

[A dinner at the Prince's, with Soret and Meyer. Meyer gives his impression of his first sight (in Goethe's company) of Schiller, at Jena: "a crucified Christ." Then talks of Jean Paul.

Friday, April 1, 1831.

At table talked with Goethe on various subjects. He showed me a water-colour drawing by Herr von Reutern, representing a young peasant, who stands in the market-place of a small town near a female basket-seller. The young man is surveying the baskets, which lie before him; while two females seated, and a stout lass who stands by them, regard his comely youthful face with satisfaction. The picture is so prettily composed, and there is such *naïveté* and truth in the expression of the figures, that you cannot look at it enough.

"Water-colour painting," said Goethe, "is brought to a very high degree in this picture. There are some silly folks who say that Herr von Reutern is indebted to nobody in his art, but has everything from himself—as if a man could have anything from himself but clumsiness and stupidity. If this artist has had no master so-called, he has nevertheless had intercourse with excellent masters; and from these, as well as from great predecessors and ever-present nature, he has got what he now possesses. Nature has given him an excellent talent, and nature and art together have perfected him. He is excellent, and in many respects unique; but we cannot say that he has everything from himself. Of a thoroughly crazy and defective artist, we may, indeed, say he has everything from himself; but of an excellent one, never."

Goethe then showed me a work by the same artist, a frame richly painted with gold and various colours, with a place left in the middle for an inscription. At the top there was a building in the Gothic style; rich arabesques, with landscapes and domestic scenes interwoven, ran down the two sides; at the bottom was a pleasant woodland scene, with the freshest grass and foliage.

"Herr von Reutern," said Goethe, "wishes I would write neatly in the blank space; but his frame is such a splendid work of art, that I dread to spoil the picture with my handwriting. I have composed some verses for the purpose, and think it will be better to have them inserted by the hand of a calligrapher. I would then sign them myself. What do you advise in this matter?"

"If I were Herr von Reutern," said I, "I should be grieved to have the poem in the hand of another; happy, if it were written in your own. The painter has displayed art enough in the frame—none is needed in the writing; it is only important that it should be genuine—in your own hand. I advise you, too, to use not the Roman, but the German text; for your hand has in that a more peculiar character—besides, it harmonizes better with the Gothic design in the frame."

"You may be right," said Goethe; "and in the end it will be the shortest way. Perhaps to-day will bring a courageous moment, in which I may venture upon it. But if I make a blot on the beautiful picture," he added, laughing, "you shall answer for it."

"Write only," said I, "and it will be well, however it may be."

Tuesday, April 5, 1831.

At noon with Goethe. "In Art," said he, "we do not easily meet a talent that gives us more pleasure than that of Neureuther. Artists seldom confine themselves to what they can do well; most are always trying to do more than they can, and are too fond of going beyond the circle in which Nature has placed their talent. But of Neureuther we can say that he stands *above* his talent. Objects from all departments of nature are at his command; he draws ground, rocks, and trees, as well as men or animals; and, while he lavishes such wealth on slight marginal drawings, he seems to play with his capabilities, and the spectator feels that pleasure which is ever wont to accompany a free, easy libation from abundant means.

"Nobody has gone so far as he in marginal drawings; even the great talent of Albert Dürer has been to him less a pattern than an incitement. I will send a copy of these drawings to Scotland, to Mr. Carlyle, and hope thus to make no unwelcome present to that friend."

Monday, May 2, 1831.

Goethe delighted me with the news that he had lately succeeded in almost finishing the fifth act of *Faust*, hitherto wanting.

"The purport of these scenes," said he, "is above thirty years old; it was of such importance that I could not lose my interest in it, but so difficult to carry out that it frightened me. By various arts I am now in the right train again; and, if fortune favours, I shall write off the fourth act at once."

Goethe then mentioned a well-known author. "He is a talent," said he, "to whom party-hatred serves as an alliance, and who would have produced no effect without it. We find frequent instances in literature, where hatred supplies the place of genius, and where small talents appear important, by coming forward as organs of a party. Thus too, in life, we find a multitude of persons, who have not character enough to stand alone; these in the same way attach themselves to a party, by which they feel themselves strengthened, and can at last make some figure."

Sunday, May 15, 1831.

Dined alone with Goethe in his work-room. After much cheerful talk he at last turned the conversation to his personal affairs, by rising and taking from his desk a written paper.

"Anybody who, like myself," said he, "has passed the age of eighty, has hardly a right to live, but ought each day to hold himself ready to be called away, and think of setting his house in order. I have, as I lately told you, appointed you in my will editor of my literary remains; and I have this morning drawn up, as a sort of contract, a little paper, which I wish you to sign with me."

He placed before me the paper, in which I found mentioned by name the works, both finished and unfinished, which were to be published after his death. I had come to an understanding with him upon essentials, and we both signed the contract.

The material, which I had already from time to time been busy revising, I estimated at about fifteen volumes. We then talked of certain matters of detail not yet decided.

"It may be," said Goethe, "that the publisher will be unwilling to go beyond a certain number of sheets, and that hence some part of the material must be omitted. In that case, you may omit the polemic part of my *Theory of Colours*. My peculiar doctrine is contained in the theoretical part; and, as the historical part is already of a polemic character (the leading errors of the Newtonian theory being discussed there), you will almost have polemics enough. I by no means disavow my severe dissection of the Newtonian maxims; it was necessary at the time, and will also have its value hereafter; but, at bottom, all polemic action is repugnant to my nature, and I can take but little pleasure in it."

We next talked about the *Maxims and Reflections*, which had been printed at the end of the second and third volumes of the *Wanderjahre*.

When he began to remodel and finish this novel, which had previously appeared in one volume,[1] Goethe intended to expand it into two, as indeed is expressed in the announcement of the new edition of his entire works. But, as the work progressed, the manuscript grew beyond expectation; and, as his secretary wrote widely, Goethe was deceived, and thought that he had enough not only for two but for three volumes, and accordingly the manuscript went in three volumes to the publishers. However, when the printing had reached a certain point, it was found that Goethe had made a miscalculation, and that the last two volumes especially were too small. They sent for more manuscript; and, as the course of the novel (*Roman*) could not be altered, and it was impossible to invent, write, and insert a new tale (*Novelle*) in the hurry of the moment, Goethe was really in some perplexity.

In these circumstances he sent for me, told me the state of the case, and mentioned at the same time how he thought to help himself out of the difficulty, laying before me two large bundles of manuscript, which he had caused to be fetched for that purpose.

"In these two parcels you will find various papers hitherto unpublished, detached pieces, finished and unfinished, opinions on natural science, art, literature, and life, all mingled together. Suppose you were to make up, from these, six or eight printed sheets to fill the gaps in my *Wanderjahre*? Strictly speaking, they have nothing to do with it, but the proceeding may be justified by the fact that mention is made of an archive in Makaria's house, in which such detached pieces are preserved. Thus we shall not only get over a great difficulty for the moment, but also find a fitting vehicle for sending a number of very interesting things into the world."

I approved of the plan, set to work at once, and soon completed the desired arrangement. Goethe seemed well satisfied. I had put together the whole in two principal parts, one under the title—*From Makaria's Archive*; the other, under the head—*According to the Views of the Wanderer*. And as Goethe, at this time, had just finished two important poems, one—*On*

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[1] This original shorter *Wanderjahre* is the one translated by Mr. Carlyle, and inserted in his *Specimens of German Romance*. The larger novel, which appears in Goethe's collected works, has not, to my knowledge, been translated.—J. O.

Since Mr. Oxenford wrote, the enlarged edition has been translated into English by A. H. Gunlogson and published in Bohn's Standard Library, 1882.

Schiller's Skull, and the other—*Kein Wesen kann zu nichts zerfallen* (No Being can fall away to Nothing), he was desirous to bring out these also, and we added them at the close of the two divisions.

But when the *Wanderjahre* came out, nobody knew what to make of it. The progress of the romance was seen to be interrupted by a number of enigmatical sayings, the explanation of which could be expected only from men of certain departments—such as artists, *literati*, and scientists—and which greatly annoyed all other readers, especially female readers. Then, as for the two poems, people could as little understand them as they could guess how they got into such a place. Goethe laughed at this.

"What is done is done," said he to-day; "and all you have to do is, when you edit my literary remains, to insert these things in their proper places; so that when my works are republished they may be distributed in proper order and the *Wanderjahre* may be reduced to two volumes, according to the original intention."

We agreed that I should hereafter arrange all the aphorisms relating to Art in a volume on subjects of art, all relating to Nature in a volume on natural science in general, and all the ethical and literary maxims in a volume adapted for them.

Wednesday, May 5, 1831.

We talked of *Wallenstein's Camp*. I had often heard that Goethe had assisted in the composition of this piece, and in particular that the Capuchin sermon came from him. To-day, at dinner, I asked him, and he replied:

"At bottom, it is all Schiller's work. But, as we lived in such a relation that Schiller not only told me his plan, and talked it over with me, but also communicated what he did from day to day, hearing and using my remarks, I may be said to have had some share in it. For the Capuchin sermon, I sent him a discourse by Abraham a Sancta Clara, from which he immediately composed his with great skill.

"I scarcely remember that any passages came from me except the two lines:

'Ein Hauptmann den ein andrer erstach
Liess mir ein paar glückliche Würfel nach.'

A captain, whom another slew,
Left me a pair of lucky dice.

Wishing to give some motive for the peasant's possession of the false dice, I wrote down these lines in the manuscript with my own hand. Schiller had not troubled himself about that, but, in his bold way, had given the peasant the dice without inquiring much how he came by them. A careful linking together of motives was, as I have said, not in his way; that is probably why his pieces had so much the greater effect on the stage."

Sunday, May 29, 1831.

Goethe told me of a boy who could not console himself after he had committed a trifling fault.

"I was sorry to observe this," said he, "for it shows a too tender conscience, which values so highly its own moral self that it will excuse nothing in it. Such a conscience makes hypochondriacal men, if it is not balanced by great activity."

A nest of young hedge-sparrows, with one of the old birds which had been caught with bird-lime, had lately been brought me. I saw with admiration that the bird not only continued to feed its young in my chamber, but even, when set free through the window, returned to them again. Such parental love, superior to danger and imprisonment, moved me deeply, and to-day I expressed my surprise to Goethe.

"Foolish man!" he replied, with a meaning smile; "if you believed in God, you would not wonder.

'Ihm ziemt's, die Welt im Innern zu bewegen,
Natur in Sich, Sich in Natur zu hegen,
So dass, was in Ihm lebt, und webt, und ist,
Nie Seine Kraft, nie Seinen Geist vermisst.'

He from within glories to move the world,
To foster Nature in Himself, Himself
In Nature, so that all that lives in Him
Is ne'er without His spirit and His strength.

"Did not God inspire the bird with this all-powerful love for its young, and did not similar impulses pervade all animate nature, the world could not subsist. But thus is the divine energy everywhere diffused, and divine love everywhere active."

Goethe made a similar remark a short time ago, when a model from Myron's cow, with the suckling calf, was sent him by a young sculptor.

"Here," said he, "we have a subject of the highest sort—the nourishing principle that upholds the world and pervades all nature is here brought before our eyes by a beautiful symbol. This, and similar images, I call the true symbols of the omnipresence of God."

Monday, June 6, 1831.

Goethe showed me to-day the beginning of the fifth act of *Faust*, hitherto wanting. I read to the place where the cottage of Philemon and Baucis is burned, and Faust, standing by night on the balcony of his palace, smells the smoke, which is borne to him by a light breeze.

"These names, Philemon and Baucis," said I, "transport me to the Phrygian coast, reminding me of the famous couple of antiquity. But our scene belongs to modern days, and a Christian landscape."

"My Philemon and Baucis," said Goethe, "have nothing to do with that renowned ancient couple or the tradition connected with them. I gave this couple the names merely to elevate the characters. The persons and relations are similar, and hence the use of the names has a good effect."

We then spoke of Faust, whom the hereditary portion of his character—discontent—has not left even in his old age, and who, amid all the treasures of the world, and in a new dominion of his own making, is annoyed by a couple of lindens, a cottage, and a bell, which are not his. He is therein not unlike Ahab, King of Israel, who fancied he possessed nothing, unless he could also make the vineyard of Naboth his own.

"Faust," said Goethe, "when he appears in the fifth act, should, according to my design, be exactly a hundred years old, and I rather think it would be well expressly to say so in some passage."

We then spoke of the conclusion, and Goethe directed my attention to the passage:

Delivered is the noble spirit [1]
  From the control of evil powers;
Who ceaselessly doth strive will merit
  That we should save and make him ours:
If *Love* celestial never cease
  To watch him from its *upper sphere*;
The children of eternal peace
  Bear him to cordial welcome there.

"In these lines," said he, "is contained the key to Faust's salvation. In Faust himself there is an activity that becomes constantly higher and purer to the end, and from above there is eternal love coming to his aid. This harmonizes perfectly with our religious views; according to which we can obtain heavenly bliss, not through our own strength alone, but with the assistance of divine grace.

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[1] This is Mrs. Fuller's version, with a slight alteration.—J. O.

"You will confess that the conclusion, where the redeemed soul is carried up, was difficult to manage; and that, amid such supersensual matters about which we scarcely have even an intimation, I might easily have lost myself in the vague—if I had not, by means of sharply-drawn figures, and images from the Christian Church, given my poetical design a desirable form and substance."

In the following weeks Goethe finished the fourth act, which had been wanting; so that in August the whole second part was sewed together quite complete. Goethe was extremely happy in having at last attained this object, towards which he had been striving so long.

"My remaining days," said he, "I may now consider a free gift; and it is now, in fact, of little consequence what I now do, or whether I do anything."

(Sup.) Monday, June 20, 1831.

This afternoon a short half-hour at Goethe's, whom I found still at dinner.

We conversed upon some subjects of natural science; particularly upon the imperfection and insufficiency of language, by which errors and false views which afterwards could not easily be overcome were spread abroad. "The case is simply this," said Goethe. "All languages have arisen from surrounding human necessities, human occupations, and the general feelings and views of man. If, now, a superior man gains an insight into the secret operations of nature, the language which has been handed down to him is not sufficient to express anything so remote from human affairs. He ought to have at command the language of spirits to express adequately his peculiar perceptions. But as this is not so, he must, in his views of the extraordinary in nature, always grasp at human expressions; with which he almost always falls too short, lowering his subject, or even injuring and destroying it."

"If *you* say this," said I, "you who always pursue your subjects very closely, and, as an enemy to phrases, can always find the most fitting expressions for your higher perceptions, there is something in it. But I should have thought that, generally, we Germans might be contented. Our language is so extraordinarily rich, elaborated, and capable of progress, that even if we are obliged sometimes to have recourse to a rope, we can still arrive pretty nearly at the proper expression. The French are at a great disadvantage when compared with us. With them the expression for some higher view of nature by a trope, generally borrowed from a technicality, is at once material and vulgar, so that it is by no means adequate to a higher view."

"How right you are," said Goethe, "has appeared to me lately, on the occasion of the dispute between Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire has certainly a great insight into the spiritual workings of nature; but his French language, so far as he is forced to use traditional expressions, leaves him quite in the lurch. And this not only in mysteriously spiritual, but also in visible, purely corporeal subjects and relations. If he would express the single parts of an organic being, he has no other word but *material*: thus, for instance, the bones, which, as homogeneous parts, form the organic whole of an arm, are placed upon the same scale of expression as the stones and planks with which a house is built.

"In the same inappropriate way, the French use the expression *composition*, in speaking of the productions of nature. I can certainly put together the individual parts of a machine made of separate pieces, and, upon such a subject, speak of a composition; but not when I have in my mind the individual parts of an organic whole, which produce themselves with life, and are pervaded by a common soul."

"It appears to me," added I, "that the expression *composition* is also inappropriate and degrading to genuine productions of art and poetry."

"It is a thoroughly contemptible word," returned Goethe, "for which we have to thank the French, and of which we should endeavour to rid ourselves as soon as possible. How can one say, Mozart has *composed* [*componirt*] *Don Juan*! Composition! As if it were a piece of cake or biscuit, which had been stirred together out of eggs, flour, and sugar! It is a spiritual creation, in which the details, as well as the whole, are pervaded by *one* spirit, and by the breath of *one* life; so that the producer did not make experiments, and patch together, and follow his own caprice, but was altogether in the power of the dæmonic spirit of his genius, and acted according to his orders."

(Sup.) Thursday, December 1, 1831.

Passed a short hour with Goethe, in varied conversation. We then came to Soret.

"I have lately been reading a very pretty poem of his," said Goethe, "a trilogy—the first two parts of which possess an agreeable rusticity; but the last, under the title *Midnight*, bears a sombre character. In this *Midnight* he has succeeded. In reading it, you actually breathe the breath of night; almost as in the pictures of Rembrandt, in which you also seem to feel the night-air. Victor Hugo has treated similar subjects, but not with such felicity. In the nocturnal scenes of this indisputably great man, it is never actually night; on the contrary, the subjects remain always as distinct and visible as if it were still day and the represented night were merely a deception. Soret has unquestionably surpassed the renowned Victor Hugo, in his *Midnight*."

I was pleased at this commendation, and resolved to read the trilogy by Soret as soon as possible. "We possess, in our literature, very few trilogies," remarked I.

"This form," said Goethe, "is very rare amongst the moderns generally. It sometimes happens that a subject seems naturally to demand a treatment in three parts; so that in the first there is a sort of introduction, in the second a sort of catastrophe, and in the third a satisfying *dénouement*. In my poem of *The Youth and the Fair Miller*, these requisites are found, although when I wrote it I by no means thought of making a trilogy. My *Paria*, also, is a perfect trilogy; and, indeed, it was as a trilogy that I intentionally treated this cycle. My *Trilogie der Leidenschaft* (Trilogy of Passion), as it is called, was, on the contrary, not originally conceived as a trilogy; but became a trilogy gradually, and to a certain extent incidentally. At first, as you know, I had merely the elegy, as an independent poem. Then Madame Szimanowska, who had been at Marienbad with me that summer, visited me, and by her charming melodies awoke in me the echo of those youthful happy days. The strophes I dedicated to this fair friend are therefore quite in the metre and tone of the elegy, and suit very well as a satisfactory conclusion. Then Weygand wished to prepare a new edition of my *Werther*, and asked me for a preface; which to me was a very welcome occasion to write my *Poem to Werther*. But as I had still a remnant of that passion in my heart, the poem as it were formed itself into an introduction to the elegy. Thus it happened that all the three poems that now stand together are pervaded by the same love-sick feeling; and the *Trilogie der Leidenschaft* formed itself I knew not how.

"I have advised Soret to write more trilogies; and indeed he should do it as I have described. He should not take the trouble to seek a particular subject for a trilogy; but should rather select, from the rich store of his unprinted poems, one that is especially pregnant with meaning, and, when occasion offers, add a sort of introduction, and conclusion—yet still so that the three productions are separated by a perceptible gap. In this manner the end is attained far more easily, and much thinking (which is notoriously, as Meyer says, a very difficult thing) is spared."

We then spoke of Victor Hugo, remarking that his too great fertility had been highly prejudicial to his talent.

"How can a writer help growing worse, and destroying the finest talent in the world," said Goethe, "if he has the audacity to write in a single year two tragedies and a novel; and further, when he appears to work only in order to scrape together immense sums of money? I do not blame him for trying to become rich, and to earn present renown; but if he intends to live long in futurity, he must begin to write less and to work more."

Goethe then went through *Marion de Lorme*, and endeavoured to make it clear to me that the subject contained only sufficient material to make one single good and really tragical act; but that the author had allowed himself, for quite secondary considerations, to be misled into stretching out his subject to five long acts. "In these circumstances," said Goethe, "we have merely the advantage of seeing that the poet is great in the representation of details; which certainly is something, and that no trifle."

Wednesday, December 21, 1831.

Dined with Goethe. We talked of the reason why his Theory of Colours had been so little diffused.

"It is very hard to communicate," said he, "for, as you know, it requires not only to be read and studied, but to be *done*—and this is difficult. The laws of poetry and painting may likewise be communicated to a certain extent; but to be a good poet and painter genius is required, which is not to be communicated. To receive a simple primitive phenomenon, to recognize it in its high significance, and to go to work with it, requires a productive spirit, which is able to take a wide survey, and is a rare gift only to be found in very superior natures

"And even this is not enough. For, as every rule and all genius do not make a painter, uninterrupted practice being still required—so with the Theory of Colours it is not enough to know the chief laws and to have a suitable mind; it is necessary to be constantly occupied with the several single phenomena (which are often very mysterious) and with their deductions and combinations.

"Thus, for instance, we know well enough the general proposition that a green colour is produced by a mixture of yellow and blue; but before a person can say that he comprehends the green of the rainbow, or of foliage, or of sea-water, there will be requisite a thorough investigation of the whole region of colour, with a consequent acme of acuteness which scarcely anyone has yet attained."

After dinner, we looked at some landscapes by Poussin.

"Those places on which the painter throws the principal light," observed Goethe, "do not admit of detail in the execution; and therefore water, masses of rock, bare ground, and buildings, are most suitable subjects to bear the principal light. Things that on the contrary require more detail in the drawing cannot well be used by the artist in those light places.

"A landscape-painter should possess various sorts of knowledge. It is not enough for him to understand perspective, architecture, and the anatomy of men and animals; he must also have some insight into botany and mineralogy, that he may know how to express properly the characteristics of trees and plants, and the character of the different sorts of mountains. It is not indeed necessary that he should be an accomplished mineralogist—since he has to do chiefly with lime, slate, and sandstone mountains; and only needs know in what forms they lie, how they are acted upon by the atmosphere, and what sort of trees thrive, and are stunted, upon them."

He showed me then some landscapes, by Hermann von Schwanefeld, making remarks upon the art and personality of that eminent man.

"We find in him," said he, "art and inclination more completely identified than in any other. He has a deep love for nature, and a divine tranquillity which communicates itself to us when we look upon his pictures. He was born in the Netherlands, and studied at Rome under Claude Lorraine. On this master he formed himself to the highest perfection, and developed his fine capacities in the freest manner."

We looked into an *Artist's Lexicon*, to see what was said of Hermann von Schwanefeld, and found him censured for not equalling his master.

"The fools!" said Goethe; "von Schwanefeld was a different man from Claude Lorraine, and the latter could not boast of being the better of the two. If there were nothing more in one's life than is told by our biographers and lexicon writers, it would be a bad business, not worth the trouble it costs."

At the close of this, and in the beginning of the next year, Goethe turned again to his favourite studies, the natural sciences. At the suggestion of Boisserée, he occupied himself with deeper inquiries into the laws of the rainbow; and also, from sympathy with the dispute between Cuvier and Saint-Hilaire, with subjects referring to the metamorphoses of the plant and animal world. He likewise revised with me the historical part of the *Theory of Colours*; taking also lively interest in a chapter on the blending of colours, which I, by his desire, was arranging to be inserted in the theoretical volume.

During this time, there was no lack of interesting conversation between us, or of valuable utterances on his side. But, as he was daily before my eyes, fresh and energetic as ever, I fancied this must always be the case, and was too careless of recording his words till it was too late, and, on March 22, 1832, I, with thousands of noble Germans, had to weep for his irreparable loss.

1832

(Sup.) Sunday, March 11, 1832.

This evening for an hour with Goethe, talking of various interesting subjects. I had bought an English Bible, in which I found, to my great regret, that the apocryphal books were not contained. They had been rejected, because they were not considered genuine and of divine origin. I greatly missed the noble Tobias, that model of a pious life, the Wisdom of Solomon, and Jesus Sirach—all writings of such high mental and moral elevation, that few others equal them. I spoke to Goethe of my regret at the very narrow view by which some of the writings of the Old Testament are looked upon as immediately proceeding from God; while others, equally excellent, are not so. As if there could be anything noble and great which did not proceed from God, and which was not a fruit of His influence.

"I am thoroughly of your opinion," returned Goethe. "Still, there are two points of view from which biblical subjects may be contemplated. There is the point of view of a sort of primitive religion, of pure nature and reason, which is of divine origin. This will always be the same, and will last and prevail as long as divinely endowed beings exist. It is, however, only for the elect, and is far too high and noble to become universal. Then there is the point of view of the Church, which is of a more human nature. This is defective and subject to change; but it will last, in a state of perpetual change, as long as there are weak human beings. The light of unclouded divine revelation is far too pure and brilliant to be suitable and supportable to poor weak man. But the Church steps in as a useful mediator, to soften and to moderate, by which all are helped, and many are benefited. Through the belief that the Christian Church, as the successor of Christ, can remove the burden of human sin, it is a very great power. To maintain themselves in this power and in this importance, and thus to secure the ecclesiastical edifice, is the chief aim of the Christian priesthood.

"This priesthood, therefore, does not so much ask whether this or that book in the Bible greatly enlightens the mind, and contains doctrines of high morality and noble human nature. It rather looks upon the books of Moses with reference to the fall of man and the origin of a necessity for a Redeemer; it searches the prophets for repeated allusions to Him—the Expected One—and, in the Gospels, regards His actual earthly appearance and His death upon the cross as the atonement for our human sins. You see that for such purposes, and weighed in such a balance, neither the noble Tobias, nor the Wisdom of Solomon, nor the sayings of Sirach, can have much weight. Still, with reference to things in the Bible, the question whether they are genuine or spurious is odd enough. What is genuine but that which is truly excellent, which stands in harmony with the purest nature and reason, and which even now ministers to our highest development! What is spurious but the absurd and the hollow, which brings no fruit—at least, no good fruit! If the authenticity of a biblical book is to be decided by the question—whether something true throughout has been handed down to us, we might on some points doubt the authenticity of the Gospels; since those of Mark and Luke were not written from immediate presence and experience, but, according to oral tradition, long afterwards; and the last, by the disciple John, was not written till he was very old. Yet I look upon all four Gospels as thoroughly genuine; for there is in them the reflection of a greatness which emanated from the person of Jesus, and which was of as divine a kind as ever was seen upon earth. If I am asked whether it is in my nature to pay Him devout reverence, I say—certainly! I bow before Him as the divine manifestation of the highest principle of morality. If I am asked whether it is in my nature to revere the Sun, I again say—certainly! For he is likewise a manifestation of the highest Being, and indeed the most powerful that we children of earth are allowed to behold. I adore in him the light and the productive power of God; by which we all live move, and have our being—we, and all the plants and animals with us. But if I am asked whether I am inclined to bow before a thumb-bone of the Apostle Peter or Paul, I say—'Spare me, and stand off with your absurdities!'

"'Quench not the spirit,' says the Apostle. There are many absurdities in the propositions of the Church; nevertheless rule it will—so it must have a narrow-minded multitude, which bows its head and likes to be ruled. The high and richly endowed clergy dread nothing more than the enlightenment of the lower orders. They withheld the Bible from them as long as it was possible. Besides, what can a poor member of the Christian Church think of the princely magnificence of a richly-endowed bishop; when he sees in the Gospels the poverty and indigence of Christ, who, with His disciples, travelled humbly on foot, whilst the princely bishop rattles along in his carriage drawn by six horses!

"We scarcely know what we owe to Luther, and the Reformation in general. We are freed from the fetters of spiritual narrow-mindedness; we have, in consequence of our increasing culture, become capable of turning back to the fountain head, and of comprehending Christianity in its purity. We have, again, the courage to stand with firm feet upon God's earth, and to feel ourselves in our divinely-endowed human nature. Let mental culture go on advancing; let the natural sciences go on gaining in depth and breadth, and the human mind expand as it may—it will never go beyond the elevation and moral culture of Christianity as it glistens and shines forth in the Gospel!

"But the better we Protestants advance in our noble development, so much the more rapidly will the Catholics follow us. As soon as they feel themselves caught up by the ever-extending enlightenment of the time, they must go on, do what they will, till at last the point is reached where all is but one.

"The mischievous sectarianism of the Protestants will also cease, and with it the hatred and hostile feeling between father and son, sister and brother; for as soon as the pure doctrine and love of Christ are comprehended in their true nature, and have become a vital principle, we shall feel ourselves as human beings, great and free, and not attach special importance to a degree more or less in the outward forms of religion. Besides, we shall all gradually advance from a Christianity of words and faith, to a Christianity of feeling and action."

The conversation turned upon the great men who had lived before Christ—among the Chinese, the Indians, the Persians, and the Greeks; and it was remarked, that the divine power had been as operative in them as in some of the great Jews of the Old Testament. We then came to the question how far God influenced the great natures of the present world in which we live?

"To hear people speak," said Goethe, "you would almost believe they were of opinion God had withdrawn into silence since those old times, and man was now placed quite upon his own feet and had to see how he could get on without God and

His daily invisible breath. In religious and moral matters, a divine influence is indeed still allowed; but in matters of science and art it is believed that they are merely earthy, and nothing but the product of human powers.

"Let anybody only try, with human will and human power, to produce something that may be compared with the creations that bear the names of *Mozart*, *Raphael*, or *Shakespeare*. I know very well that these three noble beings are not the only ones, and that innumerable excellent geniuses have worked in every province of art, and produced things as perfect. But if they were as great as those, they rose above ordinary human nature, and in the same proportion were as divinely endowed as they.

"And after all what does it all come to? God did not retire to rest after the well-known six days of creation, but is constantly active as on the first. It would have been for Him a poor occupation to compose this heavy world out of simple elements, and to keep it rolling in the sunbeams from year to year, if He had not had the plan of founding a nursery for a world of spirits upon this material basis. So He is now constantly active in higher natures to attract the lower ones."

Early in March 1832.[1]

Goethe mentioned at table that he had received a visit from Baron Carl von Spiegel, and that he had been pleased with him beyond measure.

"He is a very fine young man," said Goethe; "in his mien and manners he has something by which the nobleman is seen at once. He could as little dissemble his descent as anyon could deny a higher intellect; for birth and intellect both give to their possessor a stamp no incognito can conceal. Like beauty, these are powers that cannot be approached withou the feeling that they are higher."

Some days later.

We talked of the tragic idea of Destiny among the Greeks.

"It no longer suits our way of thinking," said Goethe "it is obsolete, and is also in contradiction with our religiou views. If a modern poet introduces such antique ideas int a drama, it always has an air of affectation. It is a costume long since out of fashion; which, like the Roman toga, no longer suits us.

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[1] In the original book this conversation follows immediately the on of December 21, 1831, and with the remainder of the book is preface thus: "The following I noted down shortly afterwards (that is, afte they took place) from memory."—J. O.

"It is better for us moderns to say with Napoleon, 'Politics are Destiny.' But let us beware of saying, with our latest *literati*, that politics are poetry, or a suitable subject for the poet. The English poet Thomson wrote a very good poem on the Seasons, but a very bad one on Liberty; and that not from want of poetry in the poet, but from want of poetry in the subject.

"If a poet would work politically, he must give himself up to a party; and so soon as he does that, he is lost as a poet—he must bid farewell to his free spirit, his unbiased view, and draw over his ears the cap of bigotry and blind hatred.

"The poet, as a man and citizen, will love his native land; but the native land of his *poetic* powers and poetic action is the good, noble, and beautiful, which is confined to no particular province or country, and which he seizes upon and forms wherever he finds it. Therein is he like the eagle, which hovers with free gaze over whole countries, and to whom it is of no consequence whether the hare on which he pounces is running in Prussia or in Saxony.

"And, then, what is meant by love of one's country? what is meant by patriotic deeds? If the poet has employed a life in battling with pernicious prejudices, in setting aside narrow views, in enlightening the minds, purifying the tastes, ennobling the feelings and thoughts of his countrymen, what better could he have done? how could he have acted more patriotically?

"To make such ungrateful and unsuitable demands upon a poet is just as if we required the captain of a regiment to show himself a patriot by taking part in political innovations and thus neglecting his proper calling. The captain's country is his regiment; and he will show himself an excellent patriot by troubling himself about political matters only so far as they concern him, and bestowing all his mind and all his care on the battalions under him, trying so to train and discipline them that they may do their duty if ever their native land should be in peril.

"I hate all bungling like sin; but, most of all, bungling in state affairs, which produces nothing but mischief to thousands and millions.

"You know that, on the whole, I care little what is written about me; but yet it comes to my ears, and I know well enough that, hard as I have toiled all my life, all my labours are as nothing in the eyes of certain people, just because I have disdained to mingle in political parties. To please such people I must have become a member of a Jacobin club, and preached bloodshed and murder. However, not a word more upon this wretched subject, lest I become unwise in railing against folly."

In the same manner he blamed the political course, so much praised by others, of Uhland.

"Mind," said he, "the politician will devour the poet. To be a member of the States, and to live amid daily jostlings and excitements, is not for the delicate nature of a poet. His song will cease, and that is in some sort to be lamented. Swabia has plenty of men, sufficiently well educated, well meaning able, and eloquent, to be members of the States; but only one poet of Uhland's class."

The last stranger whom Goethe entertained as his guest wa the eldest son of Frau von Arnim; the last words he wrot were some verses in the album of this young friend.

The morning after Goethe's death, a deep desire seized m to look once again upon his earthly garment. His faithfu servant, Frederick, opened for me the chamber in which he wa laid out. Stretched upon his back, he reposed as if asleep profound peace and security reigned in the features of hi sublimely noble countenance. The mighty brow seemed ye to harbour thoughts. I wished for a lock of his hair; bu reverence prevented me from cutting it off. The body la naked, only wrapped in a white sheet; large pieces of ice had bee placed near it, to keep it fresh as long as possible. Frederic drew aside the sheet, and I was astonished at the divine magnificence of the limbs. The breast was powerful, broad, an arched; the arms and thighs were full, and softly muscular the feet were elegant, and of the most perfect shape; nowher on the whole body, was there a trace either of fat or of leannes and decay. A perfect man lay in great beauty before me; an the rapture the sight caused made me forget for a moment tha the immortal spirit had left such an abode. I laid my han on his heart—there was a deep silence—and I turned away t give free vent to my suppressed tears.

THE END

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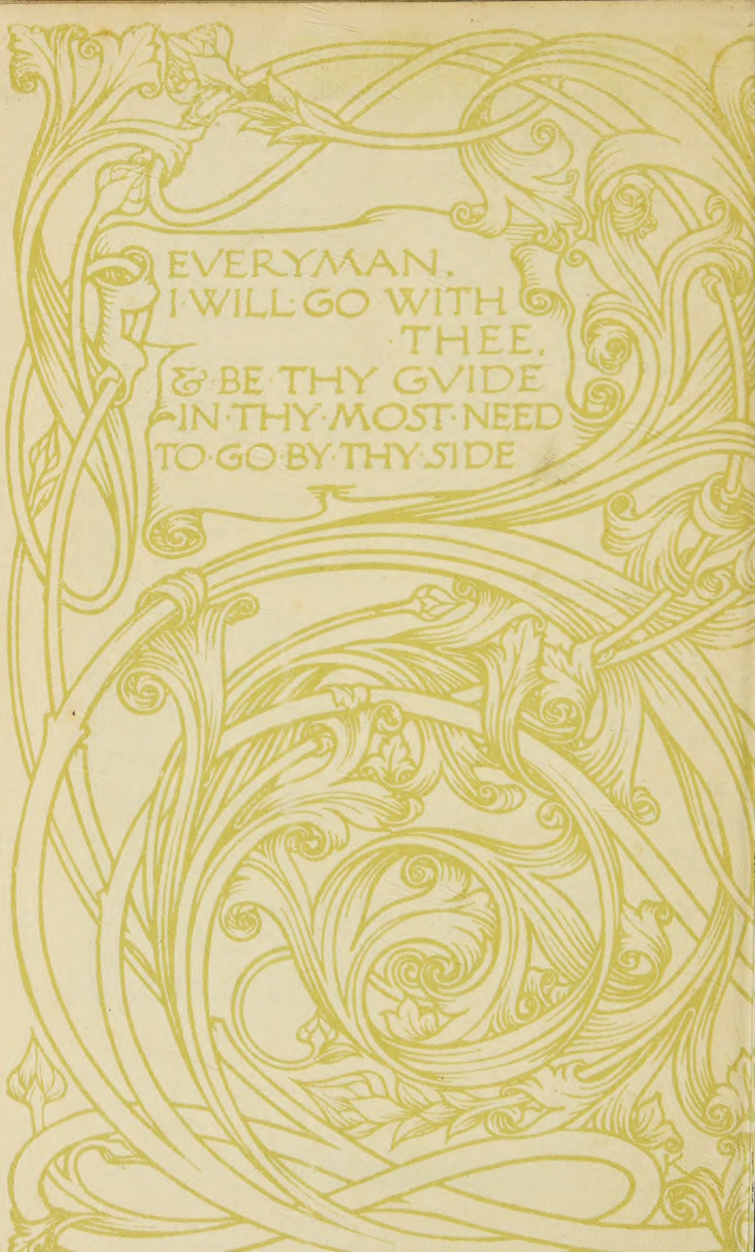

EVERYMAN,
I WILL GO WITH
THEE,
& BE THY GVIDE
IN THY MOST NEED
TO GO BY THY SIDE

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